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ABSTRACT

This dissertation presents the construction and development of a thesis that investigates links between discourses of gender and the production of writing by girls at primary school. The research took place over three years in a one-teacher rural school in country Victoria (Australia). The girls were aged from four to twelve. The research documents patterns in choices that seven girls made regarding their relationships to patriarchy, phallocentrism, feminisms, and each other. These patterns locate the girls as gendered subjects. Their writing is a cultural artifact representing their constructs, critiques, and resistances of locations. This thesis deals theoretically with language and poststructuralisms, including some psychoanalyses. Methodologically, it selects from micro-ethnographic and deconstructive research strategies to develop feminist poststructuralist theories of construction and repression. A research journal documenting spoken language, practices, and bodies serves as an additional representation of the girl-culture. Conversational interviews in the fourth year of the study provide a further dimension to the data, which represents home- and school-based field work. From descriptions, multiple theories of shifting subjectivities are suggested and exemplified. The thesis is thus an exploration of multiple ways to understand data by subjective engagement with it. As such, the focus of the thesis is on writing and discourse production, both its own and that of the girls. The dissertation contains the following chapters: (1) "A Study of Girls at School and An Exploration of Theories"; (2) "Poststructuralist Theories and Possibilities"; (3) "Methodology: Life-Texts, Writings and Deconstructions"; (4) "Post-Scriptions of Data"; and (5) "Endings." Appendices provide documentation. Includes a bibliography. (BB)

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GIRLS, SUBJECTIVITY AND LANGUAGE:

FROM FOUR TO TWELVE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

Jeanette Rhedding-Jones, TITC, BA, BEd, MEd.

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

SO 032 593

Graduate School of Education
Faculty of Economics, Education and Social Sciences
La Trobe University
Bundoora, Victoria 3083

February 1994

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this research was to investigate links between discourses of gender and the production of writing by girls at primary school. The events researched took place over three years in a one-teacher rural school in country Victoria. The girls were aged from four to twelve.

The research documents patterns in choices that seven girls made regarding their relationships to patriarchy, phallocentricism, feminisms and each other. These patterns locate the girls as gendered subjects. Their writing is a cultural artefact representing their constructs, critiques and resistances of locations. For these girl writers, their narrative writing is an entry point into various femininities.

The thesis deals theoretically with language and poststructuralisms, including some psychoanalyses. Methodologically, it selects from micro-ethnographic and deconstructive research strategies to develop feminist poststructuralist theories of construction and repression. A research journal documenting spoken language, practices and bodies serves as an additional representation of the girl-culture. Conversational interviews in the fourth year of the study provide a further dimension to the data, which represents home-based as well as school-based fieldwork.

Specifically, the research describes a particular culture of girlhood. From descriptions, multiple theories of shifting subjectivities are suggested and exemplified. The thesis is thus an exploration of multiple ways to understand data by subjective engagement with it. As such, the focus of the thesis is on writing and discourse production, both its own and that of the girls.

Assumptions framing the research, from its fieldwork phase to its theorization, were that the analysis of qualitative data can never be complete, that meaning cannot be contained by language, and that the reading of poststructuralist work requires a deconstructive reader. The research is further evidence of the non-unified subject, as the girl writer appears again to split at the time of entry into written language. These splits, which are multiple and changing, rather than binary and fixed, are produced as girls try on a series of positionings whilst writing. In these ways the thesis produces theories and evidence of the cultural construction of girlhood and of language.

PREFACE

Five years ago I decided to research some of the links between writers and what they write. I was particularly interested in women's writing, and how it seemed to strengthen not only the woman who reads it but the woman who wrote it. Feminists teaching literature were researching published novels or short stories, and sometimes poetry and plays, but I knew from my experience that a woman writes often for herself or to friends. Writing is a way of working something out, or looking at a situation more clearly, or daring. I heard the women in amateur writing groups move out of timidity. I saw my own students amazed at what they could produce as print. I remembered myself, as I worked my way alone through three off-campus degrees.

After the master's degree, nearly ten years ago now, I dreamt of a doctorate that never began. Not a possible topic, they said to my proposal of 'Women's teaching and their lives, including mine'. So I wrote poetry, practised music and got on with my new life as a single parent. But the academic urge returned, and research was changing. First I found supervisors, and their university because of them. Next was a year of intensive academic reading, talk and scribble. The following year I enrolled and found a topic. I decided to make use of two peculiarities: my current geographical isolation of being 265 km away from Melbourne, and my past two and a half decades of working with young children. Writing and writers, I decided, could be theorized from feminist perspectives by working with schoolgirls. If I found a small enough school, and one that accepted me as an odd sort of person who came and went at random, then maybe I could collect an unusual set of data.

The data I wanted had to include the context for the writing, the spoken language that happened all around the written text being produced, where people were physically and how they looked. This was in line with current theories of literacy involving whole-language classrooms. To get data like this from ordinary women writing in the privacy of their houses, or wherever they do, was virtually impossible. I wanted data to show what happened as writers wrote, so that there could be some sort of links made between being feminine or feminist and the production of writing in different ways and in differing contexts.

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I wanted not only as full a collection as possible of what each person wrote over a long period, but to see how she thought of what she wrote, both at the time and later. I knew that my own becoming happens not only by what I do, but by the stories I tell myself about the doing, either in retrospect or in advance of it happening. To write these stories, or fragmented metaphors, or memos, or intention lists, is a way to not be passive, and maybe to be heard. It seemed to me that all of this had quite a lot to do with feminism, femininity, being female. What are the links between such storyings or writings? What sort of a woman do we choose to be in our narratives or listings? And in a different situation, who will we choose to be then?

If femininity (whatever that is) is in part constructed by women as they wrote, then perhaps the process began as early as beginning to write in childhood. This could also be an appropriate rationalization for my perhaps backward step of going to a school for research. Didn't serious feminists study something else? I felt quite inferior to those other women academics who only had to read and theorize, without all the Cinderella work of having to go out and get the real-life data, and without having a life history like mine: of getting their first degree at the age of thirty-five whilst at the same time mothering four demanding babies in a little country town.

I remembered the primly correct stories I wrote myself as a seven year old at school, and the difficulty I had years later in getting out of the persona of my childhood. Also I remembered myself, as seemingly the same seven year old, defiantly carving my name on the family piano. What is the impact, on a writer, I wanted to know, of producing two different forms of writing like this?

I saw that even my more recent University teaching had divided itself in this way. Within education, I taught mainstream Language and Literacy curriculum to pre-service and post-service teachers; but outside the faculty I taught Women's Studies. Maybe as a PhD student my new and radical research into classroom writing could help to unify the feminist in me and the educator that seemed to be outside of me. Alarmingly, I found that gender studies in education were now becoming popular. How could I produce something no-one else had? Would I give theoretical priority to feminism or to language? What would I do about the linguistics I had studied earlier but which I now felt to be inappropriate for what I wanted to research? Was there any mileage in the literary theories I enjoyed reading but didn't know how to apply beyond their context of published (and usually élitist) literature?

There was another reason for deciding to work at a school. I would be more likely to be funded. Reporting on schoolgirls, if you work in education, is more marketable than reporting on women. So, feeling like an exploiter, I apologetically asked the next teacher at a one-teacher school I visited as part of my job if he thought it would be all right if I worked at his school as a researcher.

Making a narrative of my initial approaches to this thesis is one way to introduce its content and its purpose. Over its five year production time many more purposes and issues have appeared. At first, I imagined much research work at the girls' homes, particularly with their mothers, but as time went on I could see myself becoming more and more engrossed in what happened with the girls as a group together at school. Being free to change methodological and theoretical direction was both a pleasure and a problem for me as the only researcher in this project. Constantly selecting which way to go, as a field worker and as a theorist, became a feature of the research. Deciding that many ways were possible at once was a major step I took in my third year of candidacy.

This happened as I was writing a conference paper. My way of dealing with a research problem was to face it by sending an abstract off to a conference committee of whatever discipline my current problem seemed to be based in. In this way I forced myself to present my dilemmas about language research to applied linguists, my dilemmas about feminist theories to feminist scholars, my dilemmas about data reading to other post-graduate students. This particular paper towards the end of my third year targeted a national audience of researchers in education, and it concerned my lack of understanding of the term 'poststructuralism'. The writing of this paper occupied me for three months before the conference, and for more than a year afterwards as I re-wrote it for publication.

I realized that accepting multiple theories meant not only working in multiple ways, but producing writing that functioned as multiplications. This contrasted with the writing of traditional argument where everything adds up to produce a particular answer at the end. Leaving research open rather than neatly closing it off is a dangerous way to work. But if I was to be honest about explaining data then I must admit that no theory about the things I set out to research could ever be fully adequate. If I had wanted fully adequate theory, I told myself, I would have researched something else. And this would have meant a different set of data from the set I had collected. At this stage the term 'subjectivity' was still a word used by other people but not by me.

This thesis is, for reasons relating to the narrative I am now telling, a circular piece of writing. I hope it can be read in many ways; (un)certainly I have written it many times. Put as simply as possible, its topic is girls and the construction of various femininities, especially through writing. It theorizes multiplicity as a struggle through which power/knowledge is articulated. Additionally, it theorizes discourses through which girl subjects come to knowledge/power. As a research document, the thesis deals with a living history of signification, which is also the way I now see these girls' writing productions. Pervading all of this are my theories of a culture of girlhood, which by analogy have the potential to go beyond this thesis to theorize subjectivity and women's collectivity. The seven girls who let me in to a little of their lives, and who came a little into mine, may represent other girls who once were, and who some of us still are.

There are two parts to my dissertation. The first locates the thesis (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) and the second develops it (Chapters 4 and 5). Between is an Interlude of descriptions, and at the beginning is this Preface I am ending now. Appendices provide documentation and a Bibliography lists publications I have been reading for the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

A STUDY OF GIRLS AT SCHOOL AND AN EXPLORATION OF THEORIES

Introduction

This introductory chapter to the thesis sets out to give an immediate and dual sense of the research project. On the one hand, it is a study of rural primary school girls and their writing over three years. On the other hand, it is an exploration of a range of theoretical issues about the construction of femininity, the nature of contemporary social research, the functions of written and spoken language and the possibilities in feminist poststructuralist descriptions and interrogations of life events.

As the thesis develops, these theoretical issues are articulated through my interrogations of the events, practices and artefacts from the one-teacher school. Because my theorizing also integrated itself with the field work phase, the process of producing a research journal meant not only documenting what seemed to be happening at the school, but selecting what to record. These selections reflect my research focus on femininity and girls. They also reflect my own positionings.

I tried to remain centred on the task of seeing only matters that related to my silent questionings of what it meant for these girls to be a girl. As a way of seeing what was happening in these girls' lives, I read the writing that they wrote and listened to the things that they said. Rather than constantly being with the girls, I re-read and re-thought the same small recorded fragments of life events and texts many times. This process of re-searching meant that I have been considering some of the data for five years. In this process of considering, many different explanations and emphases have seemed plausible. The thesis comments not only on the subjective positionings and the language of the girls, but also on mine.

The girls' writing, seen in the context of the events happening that day at school, provided me with a basic set of data. This meant that when I began to read the writing that these girls gave me, I saw not what their teacher would see, but what my research topic was.

My agenda was not one of literacy but of feminism. Later, it became one of poststructuralist enquiry.

At the school, or wherever else I met with the girls, I recorded and collected evidence of what I saw and heard happening. I did this without my own deliberate intervention of feminist ideas or teacherly instructions. I realize that just being there made a difference, but I at no stage tried to influence what was written, what was said or what happened. My role was quite a silent one, and I found trying to be unobtrusive sometimes contrary to my natural inclination to interfere. I visited this school for three years like this, sometimes once a week but sometimes not for a couple of months.

This method of gathering research data gives it some of the validity of a case-study, though it can be trusted only for what it is: a particular and specific record of a small group of girls over time. In Chapter 3 I deal with the nature of micro-ethnographic research in relation to poststructuralist ways of theorizing. A rural school, where all of the boys and girls from four to twelve are in the same classroom with the same teacher, cannot claim to be a typical primary school. By theorizing from the data gathered, in Chapters 4 and 5, I show that my choice of school allows for the development of a thesis of girlhood and language. This differs from simple story-telling about events and practices in that it builds on previous research to engage with contemporary academic debates and theoretical discourses.

So that a first picture of the scene at the school can be given at the start of this thesis and not only in the usual place for the presentation of data, I shall now insert some writing from my research journal. I wrote this at the school, copying down what was said at its moment of saying. This method of recording evolved after I realized the limitations of audio recording for the sort of research I was trying to do. The following writing resulted from my follow-up visit to the school one year after the three year data-gathering phase ended. I hope that placing it at the start of this first chapter gives some idea of the personal nature of my research, of the qualities of social relationships at the school and of the kinds of writing the girls and the boys produced.

(1.12.92)
I drive my old red car up to the tiny one-teacher school, knowing the girls will recognize it immediately. It's a year since I've been here, though I've seen the girls at home. Lunch time, and they're all playing outside, with the cows in the paddocks beside them just as nonchalant as ever.

Kylie comes rushing up to me, with the two new girls I haven't met behind her. She tells me who they are. Zoe is in grade four and Alice is in grade one. We say hello. I first met Kylie in her first week of school, four years ago now, when all of this data gathering began, and when she was not yet five.

K: We're play'n horses. An' I'm the horse. An' they're saving me from the man who wants to buy me. Coz we know he'll be mean.
Z: And, see, I'm making the house all nice, so's when we get back with the horse, it'll be all nice.

Mr B comes out of the one-classroom school and he and I talk for twenty minutes or so. About what's happened with the change of government, and the possible fates of his school and my university. Ruralsville School has eleven students now. And has escaped the axe for another year. Although some of the other one-teacher schools are not so lucky.

He also talks about the children he has taught for the last five years. Donna, who now has the body of a woman, and is, he says with a smile, "rough". I look out across the schoolgrounds and see her pushing the boys around. Lucy, who is away today, and who is the same age, now in grade six, is "quite a manipulator" he says, "quite scheming, always stirring up trouble." I say, "Yes, she's pretty skilled," but he's not so sure about this. Jane, he says is a "lovely girl". When I ask him what he thinks she'll do one day, he says he can't imagine her older. I'm not sure that I can either, though I've watched her go from being a silent non-writer in grade two to the confident oldest girl in the school for next year. Mr B and I sit side by side on one of the wooden steps everybody walks on to get into the school. It's sunny, and we squint as we look across at the children playing with their hats on. When he rings the bell, three of the children line up. The others go for a drink at the taps.

Inside, Troy and Aaron read in turn to the other children. The classroom is bright, clean, organized and pleasant. Two computers with colour screens, instructions for bushfires, a wall chart with photos of the men who have been Australia's Prime Ministers, a declaration of loyalty to repeat on Mondays, and words about Christmas written up on the board. When a man I don't know comes to the door and starts chatting to Mr B, Donna gets up and helps Troy with his reading. After a while she gets herself a chair and sits on it with her feet propped up on Troy's chair. She gives me a bit of a grin when he can't get the words right.

Mr B: (after some time, to the visiting man) Thanks Kev, catch you later.

Mr ?: Right-O mate. (he leaves without getting beyond the door of the classroom or meeting me)

Mr B: (To the children) Right-O, we've had a bit of an interruption. (Troy and Donna scuttle back to their desks without being told. They know the routine, and it's way past time to begin story-writing. As soon as Mr B announces it, two of the boys make a dive for the computers. Jane goes over and helps the younger one with what he is writing.)

Later, she makes me a photocopy of what she has written herself:
One hot summer day it was Christmas Eve and an old fat man called Santa was slaving away just for little kids he was making toys ... he got in the sleigh said "goodbye" to his wife and he was off.

Aaron hands me his:
Santa looked down and there was a box. "Funny. A talking box", he said to himself and opened it. Inside was a skimpy man ... "You can come out now, boys" Santa said to his elves.

Luke writes:
Then the roof fell in and one of the kangaroos broke a leg. Santa could only go slowly. So it was morning and the kangaroo shooters came out and they started shooting but Santa just made it home."

Donna:
The reindeers reared and Santa lost his sack. It went down, down down and when it hit the ground all the toys broke. The little kids didn't get any toys from Santa. So Santa went back to his work shop and started to make new presents for the next year.

Kylie:
One cold Christmas eve Santa, Mrs Claus and his elves were getting the reindeers ... then Santa left but they left a rocking horse behind and one little girl missed out but Santa found a present for her and then he went home and slept for one month.

Two thirty, and I walk out of the school. Zoe follows me with her writing. She wasn't here when I was making my regular visits. She's not in the study. She insists on reading me what she has written as I'm almost in my car. As she reads it, three of the boys run out *of the schoolroom for playtime. They begin to play cricket. Donna comes out and watches them, eating an apple.*

Making sense of data that is more like a short story or a play than like a transcript has pushed me towards analyses stemming from literary theory rather than from linguistics. Knowing that I wrote the story myself (although I swear that it is what I heard and saw) means that I must face the business of subjectivity head on, and not just from the point of view of the girls who were the initial subjects of the research.

I have arranged this thesis so that as it unfolds a number of research questions are dealt with. These questions relate closely to the femininity constructions implicit in the research journal extract I have just presented (1.12.92). Although these are not quite the same questions I asked myself at the start of the research, they came to link the data collection to the theoretical issues I considered. I list them here as information regarding the purpose of my research:

How have these girls become the gendered persons they are? Where can I read discourses of femininity or of feminism (or their lack, or their masculine counterparts or parallels) into/from the stories the girls and the boys have written? What has the experience of schooling done to construct this gendering? What have the girls done for themselves to resist the patriarchy and phallocentricism that surround them? How can literacy be a series of steps to changes in subjectivity? Is girls' writing a reflection of the worlds of girlhood? Is it more than this?

Introduction to Methodologies

The methodological focus on a one-teacher rural primary school is intended to show how positions of power/knowledge are lived by a group of young girls. Instead of prioritizing language, which has been the practice of applied linguists and educators following linguistic frameworks, I prioritize socio-cultural practices which include language. In doing so I theorize language as a part of discursively functioning practice. Designing a methodology to take this theoretical assumption into account was crucial to the outcomes of my research.

The theoretical framing of the methodology draws on a number of strands which I shall discuss in Chapter 3. Now I introduce the research actions that took place with the girls, before briefly describing my ways of working with the gathered data.

Researching the writers at school involved micro-ethnographic collection of data. The products of this research practice are a written representation of a schoolgirl culture, copies of girls' and boys' writing, audio and video cassettes, photographs taken at the school, transcripts of school talk and interviews conducted elsewhere. In this dissertation, this qualitative data collection is read deconstructively as a means of analysing the gendered positionings of the girls studied. As academic writing presenting feminist poststructuralist theories, the dissertation is but one product of its research processes.

A quality of writing is that it remains there for readers to read, whether they themselves are the writers of it or not. This appears to simplify writing's use as data when compared to processes of audio or video recording and transcribing spoken language. Methodologically, my study of the case of a rural school has not been simple. The selection of deconstruction as an appropriate form of analysis of the data therefore led to the production of a range of papers and chapters before this resultant dissertation (Rhedding-Jones 1990b, 1991c, 1992, 1993a).

In practical terms, the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 involved me in regular weekly visits to the school at the time the teacher set aside as personal writing time for his students. As a self-labelled researcher, and not as a teacher or as a parent, I blended into the one-classroom school as best I could without being unduly intrusive and without more than minimal changes to classroom events. Additionally, I spent time with the girls in their homes with their families. In the fourth year of the project some of the girls decided to visit me at my home and at my office, or that I should meet them after school at their mother's place of paid work.

The school offered no gender-specific critiques or related creative curriculum. This meant that the girls in the study had no school-based deconstructive projects from which to resist particular gendered discourses. Not intervening was for me one of the most difficult aspects of being the researcher, especially as they seemed at first to have little consciousness or articulation of feminist agendas, and I would have liked to be an evangelist. However, by explaining to the parents, the teacher, the Ministry of Education and the girls and the boys, at the beginning of 1989, what it was I wanted to research, I found that I was then mostly unquestioned, although this was not my intention. My explanation was that I was researching girls and writing, and that I was particularly interested in their stories. I tried to keep as quiet as was reasonable at the school in order to influence as little as possible what would happen there. But during the final interviews (1992) most of the girls asked me outright why I had done the research (Appendix C).

Ruralsville primary school is the pseudonym for this selected one-teacher school, where all of the girls and boys worked and played in the same classroom. There were usually about fourteen of them, and they ranged in age from four to twelve. I chose this school because it provided me with simultaneous and naturalistic access, as a researcher, to the language and actions of all the girls and boys attending it. My observations could therefore be of the whole school at once, of smaller groups or of individuals, depending on where I placed myself. So whichever seemed to be the most interesting event, in terms of my need to develop theories of gendered and discursive subjectivity, was the event that I recorded in my research journal. The Chronology (Appendix B) is mostly the original journal writing I produced in scribbled handwriting at the school.

My task as a research-writer in the classroom was to write openly and publicly about what I saw and heard. My collection of girls' and boys' writing was given to me, as photocopies, by the writers, and for the purposes of this research. My interactions with the girls, the boys and the teacher were kept to a minimum, although if anyone came up to me to say something or to show me something I stopped my writing. And so sometimes I wrote nothing.

Organization of Dissertation

The dissertation is structured so that it provides conventional access for an academic reader. After a preface, the introduction (Chapter 1) is followed with an exposition of related theories (Chapter 2) and an outline of the methodological bases (Chapter 3). At the same time as it follows this structure, the dissertation occasionally breaks its own rules to query such structures and boundaries. As they are, the chapters represent differences of importance to research. But distinguishing between description and interpretation, and even between theories and methodologies, is often inappropriate, especially in poststructuralist work.

After Chapter 3, where I discuss my initially ethnographic and analytically deconstructive methodologies, I present an Interlude of information regarding the school, the girls and their writing. This separates the first part of the dissertation from the second part, which begins with a series of discursively different descriptions of the research data (Chapter 4). These descriptive readings represent forms of research following structural analysis, Foucauldian poststructuralism, Derridean poststructuralism and feminist poststructuralisms. They include discourses of literacy pedagogy, gender, and psychoanalysis. The dissertation concludes with multiple theoretical findings and openings for further research (Chapter 5).

After the five chapters, I present four appendices as supportive evidence or proof. These include the research journal, which is a primary data source (Appendix B: The Chronology). Other primary sources of data are the collected writings of the girls and the boys (Appendix A: The Writings) and transcripts from interviews (Appendix C: The Interviews). The appendices have the potential for additional theorizing beyond this thesis. In particular, the Chronology, which is an ethnographic representation of the girl-culture at school, could be read on its own, with my own over-voice as a speaking subject ignored. As a record of the now defunct one-teacher schools in Victoria it contains unusual information about cross-age interactions and careful pedagogy, amongst other things. For the girls involved, it is a history of their schooldays.

The Writings are photocopies of the writing given to me by the girls and boys at the school over the three year time span. The Interviews were conducted with each of the girls separately, and away from the school, in the fourth year of the study. They represent my attempt to talk with the girls about their writing and their deconstructions of gender through it. The Extra Descriptions (Appendix D) represent a wider body of analysis and additional data, and include a copy of a published history of the school's one hundred and thirty years.

In Chapter 2 I present considerations of the poststructuralist theories and possibilities I develop in part two of the dissertation. The remainder of Chapter 1 discusses issues which were basic to the way my thesis developed over time, both at the field-work level and at the level of contemporary theory: researching girls and writing, constructing femininities, discourses and productions, language theories and feminist theories. The chapter also previews some of the writing produced by each of the seven girls.

The problem of ordering the dissertation is that its discussions are interdependent. Because of this I suggest that a reader might at this point equally well move to the Interlude and the second part of the dissertation before returning to the remainder of this chapter and the two which follow it. As the Interlude provides basic information about the school and the girls' writing, this is introductory to Chapter 4, which begins a series of analysings and theorizings. Querying research practices and writing in relation to the theories of the thesis in this way becomes a circular process. Further, the division of the dissertation into its two parts is transgressed.

The writing pieces the girls gave me, as photocopies, are tangible objects, and as such they can be seen as life products. As far as possible I shall try, in my analyses in part two of the dissertation, not to isolate written texts from the sites and events that produced them. Much of the remainder of this chapter is an integration of introductions to the seven girls and at the same time a discussion of the issues. This integration includes insertions of quotations from published theorists and from the research data. The chapter concludes with overviews of language theories and of feminist theories as they relate to the thesis. Poststructuralist theories are presented as Chapter 2. Introductions of the girl writers are now interspersed with discussions of researching, femininity, discourses and language. In this way what follows is a dislocated text representing a series of beginnings.

By having been at the school when Kylie, the youngest girl in the study, wrote the following I know something of its production. On this particular day, (14.3.89), four-year-old Kylie told her teacher what she wanted written and he wrote it for her so she could copy it:

I Like school. I like my home.

I may make particular meanings of Kylie's desire to like, but I know also that what a writer has written may be a composite of what she has written before, what she has seen other people write, what she has seen on television, what has been said around her and what has been read from books. By this writing I introduce Kylie as a beginner writer and a beginner schoolgirl, learning the discourses she, or her teacher, considers appropriate.

The next youngest girl in the study is Jane, who was aged seven when she wrote this (30.5.89):

my friend plays with me and her name is emma I Like her she is my bess frienD I play with her all the time and I have got maer frienDs but emma is my bess frienD and I play with sam and I play with emma and I have tow frienD and I Like sam and emma.

Here the focus is again on liking, but also on friendship. Because the Chronology, which I wrote at the school, is not only a record of schoolgirls, I also introduce myself in the school context (30.4.91):

Kylie quizzes me about the sequencing of her illustrations. She knows the answers. I don't. She's overbearing. Delighted at her superior knowledge and my lack of it. Goes and photocopies it for me. Keeps the photocopy for herself. It's got greater prestige than the original. Makes me write the title at the top. Corrects my spelling. Then brings over her coloured pencils.

Kylie: Jeanette will you sharpen these for me?
Me: No, I don't want to sharpen pencils.
Kylie: (undeterred) Mr B will you sharpen these pencils for me?
Mr B: Bring them over here. (I hadn't realized she cannot sharpen them for herself. What is wrong with a rotating plastic sharpener? Mr B sharpens them all with a Stanley knife)

Here is a picture of myself, of the teacher and of Kylie now aged six. Relating this and classroom events like it, to the writing that was produced that day and other days, was the research task. This is qualitatively different from reading students' writing for literacy skills demonstrated or not demonstrated. Such teacher-readings of student-writing exclude readings of ideologies or gender positioning (Gilbert 1989a). In contrast, my readings of the Ruralsville writings are attempts to deal specifically with gender and with subjectivity.

The interviews in the fourth year of the study are methodologically the result of this theoretical focus and represent the girls re-searching themselves. An example of this is my conversation with Kylie in her bedroom after school (1.6.92), when she was aged eight. Here she talks about her writing of 'I Like school. I like my home'.

When I ask her on the phone if she'd agree to talk about her writing that I've got photocopies of, she said, "When?" And when I said Monday after school would suit me, she said, "Well Sunday would be better. Could you make it Sunday?" I said I couldn't. Then I talked with her mother...

K: (reading "I Like school") See there, that's where I started joining (letters together). I don't really like school. But I like home OK. (reading "We Have Two Chinese Men") Well do you know about this? We had these two Chinese men and they had to stay at our place. (pause) If only I remembered where I put my Prep book. You know why I need my Prep book? It has their names written on it. (pause) ALL of these are mine. (these pieces of writing)
Me: This is your file. I just brought YOUR file.

Here my focus on language follows Kress (1991:14) in that it presents a 'social practice which documents, summarizes and more or less temporarily or permanently "fixes" particular histories, states and outcomes in the complex of social forces'. Taking an integrated view of spoken and written language within discourses means that I try to include in my data presentations and analyses the semiotics of silence, gaps, rhythms, laughter, tears, movements, eye-contact, volume, pitch and proximity. As I see it, language produces and reproduces social practices other than its own, and is itself produced and reproduced by other social practices. Hence my theorizing of language is within particular discursive framings, which I shall describe in Chapter 2.

My thesis takes up the notion of writing as important for the writer, for personhood, desire and invention. This is different from Steedman's (1982) positioning, which takes writing to be a reflector of the world around the writers. Although Steedman's (1982) feminist research into girls beginning to write left me enthusiastic and curious, my initial thesis was that writing gives agency to writers: that is, that it shapes their world. Here the following extract from the writing of nine-year-old Donna gives some indication of the world she inhabited and the agency she showed:

I got my lichened. Anthony helped me drive I was a good driver so Anthony said that I was the best driver he had tought people so he gave me my P Plates so he is cool because he gave my my P's my mum gave me a Pink car for me and my boy frind its a wagon its so cool its pink with black and blue its the best car out all the arther cars are dumb thay are yellow and green they are all yuck.

In a way my thesis is in line with theories of student-centred writing pedagogy, in that it presents the view that language makes and resources meaning, (Britton 1970, Halliday 1978, Graves 1983). But it also deconstructs these orthodoxies. What is different is that I am theorizing not from the point of view of mother-tongue pedagogy, but from the point of view of feminism. This means that I am interested not in the writer as a technician of language or as a learner of language, but as a gendered person.

As a woman researching gendered subjectivity and working with girls, I am highly conscious of the ironies and the problems that the discourses of age necessarily add to my research. In this regard I still feel uneasy that I have worked with girls and not with women. But I am uncertain of solutions, beyond having decided that after this I shall leave girls to themselves.

Constructing Femininties

The data shows the complexity of girl students becoming agentic in the constructions of their gendered positionings. This complexity includes the contradictory practices that the girls have to deal with and which act against their agentic constructions of selfhood. Some of these factors are related to the writing the girls have to produce as part of their school's curricula. Although process writing allows girls to develop skills in writing and to produce writing products that show their development as writers, much more than this happens in a classroom when they write. For feminist agency theorists this concept gives new starting points for action, and it also expands the theorization of subjectivity.

> *The individual is not so much the product of some process of social construction that results in some relatively fixed end-product but is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate.*
>
> (Davies, 1989b:229)

I wanted to know what discourses allowed the girls to write as they did, and whether their writing was a way of making other discourses available.

Gilbert and Taylor (1991:6) draw attention to discourses of gender and say that 'cultural texts are involved in reproducing ideologies'. Their research shows ways of reading texts of popular culture for teenaged girls. Theorizing the reproduction of ideologies was a central concern of neo-Marxist critics of curriculum a decade ago (Kemmis 1982, Lundgren 1983), and has been adopted by feminists who substitute structuralist critiques of class with structuralist critiques of gender. This is useful for uncovering sexist discourses such as the ones perpetuated by published texts. However, the theory cannot take account of the lived complexity of patriarchy and more particularly of phallocentricism. In other words, it cannot theorize what women and girls do to not reproduce the status quo.

A consideration of sexist discourses, therefore, was not what I set out to research. This, I believe, can be researched more than adequately by linguistic frameworks (Poynton 1985, Pauwels 1987). The construction of femininity, though related to the presence or absence of sexism in language, is in many ways much more difficult to see. Paradoxically, this is because it includes the body. It also involves the complex nature of the interactions and misconnections between what is said and what is heard, what is written and what is read, what is done and what is not.

Socialization theory, as Davies shows (1990b), is seen to be inadequate as an explanation of how girls take up their femininity or genderedness in the way that they do. Agency can offer a theoretical view based on poststructuralist theory, which allows for many conflicting meanings to exist at the same time for the same person. Thus subjects are not only confronted with contradictions but causing them. Discursively produced subjectivity, theorized as agency, involves conflicting meanings and conflicting actions. At Ruralsville, those actions include the actions of writing. Here Lucy, here aged ten, writes:

One Day the robber Batman Bug had robbed another Buggy Bank. Bug Town was nearly bank rupt. Just then my Boss Big Face rang on my telebug. He said "Private Eye you've got a case of arresting Batman Bug.
Just then two Police Bugs came in and said "Batman Bug is in the Buggy Bank and robbing it".
I jumped in my private limo and sped off. In about 5 minutes I was there. All the police force was there. I pulled out my bug bullet and walked in the purple door. Inside it was smelling funny. Then I dropped to the floor - sleeping gas. Half an hour later I woke up.

As a writing subject, Lucy seems to explore gendered positions available to her because of particular discourses she has met. In this way my research questions are not the usual questions of teachers of literacy, where the task at hand is not the construction of the subject but the construction of each piece of writing (Christie 1989).

My underlying problem was the way women are positioned in socio-culture. In a patriarchal society, masculinity goes unmarked, as a given not considered to be discursively constituted. In focusing on girls I attempt to theorize the beginnings of womanhood, and to confront the problem at a point where it can be productively researched. Girlhood is a memorable experience shared by women, but it is infancy which currently has the retrospective spotlight on it in feminist theory outside of the discipline of education (Grosz 1990a, Lacan 1982). I suggest that the primary school is a primary site for the socio-cultural construction of femininity.

Instead of negatively analysing the language of the teacher, as the one at the school in the position of greatest power, I chose instead to analyse the power of the girls writers and their operations as a group. In this way, I show how they construct for themselves a series of feminisms and femininities. In presenting an alternative view of initial literacy, my research implicitly questions the centrality of theories of beginning speaking and the establishment of self (Lacan 1977). From the data I consider, it appears that beginning writing is also central. Further, by focussing on a culture of young schoolgirls my research seeks to displace the theoretical centrality of the family and raise the question of the importance of friendships.

To arrive at these points I shall read and describe narratives not as a series of binary oppositions between what humanists see as fiction and non-fiction, and not as comparisons of one girl and another. Following Lyotard (1984), I have tried not to promote forms of individualism, but to question unities and totalities through notions of events.

Disourses and Productions

Adopting a discursive frame of reference means approaching the written reports and written narratives of the girls not as reflections of experience but as discursive productions themselves. It means considering what choices the girls made regarding their active positioning in relation to various discourses, and seeing what forms of authority they chose to adopt as writers. In addition, the adoption of a poststructuralist stance means recognizing that research practices also are controlled by the discourses they are parts of. Locating myself as a feminist poststructuralist not only emphasizes multiple feminist readings of texts, but generated data compatible with this location.

The texts I have so far presented as introductions to their girl writers, will in part two be presented from a variety of theoretical viewpoints. For now, I continue with my introductions. Chloe, who is one year older than Lucy, wrote this when she was ten:

One slimey night Matthew Monster woke up and climbed out of his snotty compost heap. He decided to get filthy and go for a ghostboard ride. He took Lucy Longbones too. While they were boarding they met Dangerous Donna. They said "Hi fish face" "Give us a kiss sweetie" said Donna. Lucy Longbones and Matthew Monster ran away and were never, seen again.

Using the names of two of the other girls at the school, and one of the boys, Lucy writes herself into her story as part of a girl-group. For me, getting to know seven different girls over a four year period was an important part of the research process. Amongst other things, this meant that particular sites were represented in the data differently from the ways they would have been had this not been so. Following Walkerdine (1985:205), I became attentive to 'how particular forms of language, supporting particular notions of truths, come to be produced'. In so doing I saw first hand that language itself becomes an object of regulation and that the power to speak/write 'must be understood in terms of its own production.' Here the relations of production include the relations between girls, boys, teacher and me. They are also the relations between published and unpublished writing at school, and the language that was spoken and unspoken, written and unwritten. Researching a culture of young girls involves a consideration of many of the same themes that engage researchers of girls older than girls at primary school. These themes include the contradictory discourses of domesticity or paid work for women, being slags or drags, and the possibility of romance (Gilbert and Taylor 1991:14-17). What I wanted to know was how femininity was constructed before the girls took on the teenaged bodies of women, although I realize that this question is too big for me to fully deal with. This is what Margaret wrote the year she turned twelve:

"Stop biting your nails."
"Sorry Mum."
"Stop biting your nails"
"I will not do it again."
I must think of something. She thought for ages then I got it. If I get some steel I can make some metal nails and wire them so when she goes to bite her nails she will get a shock. The Mother placed the metal nails on the fingers. "Och".
"Mum my nails are giving me shocks."
Serves you right.

Here Margaret works to put herself into the third person, via the pronouns. At the same time she plays with the embodied dichotomy of a mother and daughter. It is possible that the pre-woman body denotes and defines a strength and confidence perhaps not attained again by a woman until she is much older (Macdonald and Rich 1983). My research begins to address the question of body and the unconscious through the writing of desires. For this purpose, I shall take feminist psychoanalyses as an additional mechanism for investigating the writing of the girls (Gilbert and Taylor 1991:25, Grosz 1990a, Walkerdine 1990).

It was my intention to produce research that was as far removed as possible from voyeurism, although the people whose subjectivity I was concerned with were different from me. For this reason, the me that used to be a schoolgirl, and the me that used to be a primary school teacher, and the me that used to be a mother of two young girls and two young boys was constantly engaged in what happened with the research process. But my own desire to tell the truth is complicated by the poststructuralist knowledge that there is not one truth but many; and that claims to truth are claims to power.

Language Theories

All of the fore-going sets my research project outside the traditional bounds of the language research within discourses of pedagogy, linguistics and cognitive psychology. To deliberately locate my work in relation to usual research on spoken and written language in classrooms, I shall give a very brief overview of the field outside the discourses my thesis will draw from (see Chapter 2). Whilst critical discourses (Luke 1988) and feminist and poststructuralist discourses (Gilbert 1989a) are being heard by some (Luke and Gilbert 1993), the literacy pedagogy field remains largely traditional.

Language learning theorists (Britton et. al. 1975, Goodman 1967, Graves 1983, Heath 1983, Moffett 1981, Smith 1982) focussed on reading and writing from the perspectives of developing literacy. Research that is theoretically based on such theories has focussed on 'individuals' who write rather than on subjectivity (Calkins 1983, Dyson 1989, Luria 1983, Welty 1983), on classroom settings for writing skills to be learned (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1982, Cazden 1986) and on the nature of language and literacy learning (Clay 1975, Florio and Clark 1982, Lindfors 1987). A focus on literacy, however, cannot address the matters of this dissertation: namely how beginning and continuing literacy practices, sites and events operate to position the writers as subjects themselves. Hence my interest in the following piece of writing, produced by twelve year old Eve, is not how she writes but what she writes. Maybe this should read 'how **she** writes':

Hi my name is Mandy Yesturday I had to go to my grandma's house. What a bore. It is so boring at her house. We'd been there for an hour then my grandpa turns up an hour late from the PUB. He sat down and asked me to get him a whisky. Then my grandma said to me would you like something to drink, yes said my grandpa suddleny he allways answer for people and then he said yes shell have some water.

I have now introduced each of the seven girls, via their writing, into this dissertation. In order of age they are: Kylie, Jane, Donna, Lucy, Chloe, Margaret and Eve. I return to them again in the Interlude between Chapters 3 and 4.

Much Australian research on language in classrooms is based on systemic linguistics, after Halliday (Christie 1989). Halliday (1985a:xv) says that his aim has been 'to construct a grammar for the purposes of text analysis.' He says 'linguistic analysis enables one to show how, and why, the text means what it does.' My aim is not to show how and why the text means what it does, but to show what meanings the text may have for its writers, and more importantly, who the writers are able to be because of the text and the discourses of which it is a part. Although Halliday concedes that 'multiple meanings, alternatives, ambiguities, metaphors and so on' exist, he describes these meanings as 'lower' than the grammatical level of 'understanding of the text' (1985a:xv).

A poststructuralist investigation of the workings of text claims the impossibility of systematic knowledge, which I see as inherent in linguistics. In this I follow Walkerdine (1987:7), who believes that an emphasis only on texts 'suggests a too simple relation between texts and subjectivity.' In reading the texts that the girls wrote at the school, I shall thus be working through a variety of discourses. This, as I shall show in Chapter 2, is a poststructuralist understanding of discourse, not a linguistic understanding of it.

Within current language pedagogy there is, in theory at least, a movement away from dichotomizing the two language modes of literacy and oracy (Cazden 1991, Street and Street 1991). Similarly, break-downs between classroom pedagogic practices of reading and writing, and between speaking and listening, are becoming common (Furniss and Green 1991). However, for the theoretical purposes of this dissertation, I shall specifically consider girls' writing rather than girls' reading. I hope to show, by my theorizing of productions and culture (Chapter 5), that this decision is justified, despite poststructuralist (and pedagogic) eliminations of these binaries.

The writing of beginning writers is not quantitatively great, but like all writing it is relatively dense when compared to spoken language (Halliday 1985b). This may appear to make the study of written language easy, as there is not so much of it. Nöth (1990:259) says that 'one of the specific features of writing is its multilinearity or even multidimensionality', and I believe this needs to be a part of its study. Writing is usually seen as 'a secondary semiotic system derived from speech' (Nöth 1990:259), and this may be why linguists usually study only speech. Philosophy from Plato to Derrida, however, shows a remarkable shift in the evaluation of writing as compared to speech: where Plato saw writing as the reduction of the ability to memorize, Derrida's (1976:51) thesis is that writing has primacy, and that Saussure's study of spoken language has led to the neglect of studies of writing. In this way I follow Derrida.

I also follow Bakhtin (1968-1986). One way that I do this is by critically distinguishing between textuality and textual practice. A second way is by relating experience to expression, and a third is by being not deterministic but conjectural. Further, I deal with both 'the perception of the real' and 'the construction of the imagined' (Diaz-Diocaretz 1989:122). There is not the space in this dissertation to deal with the potential of Bakhtin's theories for feminist theories, particularly as my thesis does not address linguists, but I shall make some brief comments on his work as it informs mine.

One of the central tenets of Saussurian theory is that language determines meaning. This linguistic determinism has been taken up by some feminist scholars, (Spender 1980a, Cameron 1985, Poynton 1985), and it argues that women are outside the field of production of knowledge, and therefore they have formed a non-dominant group. By Bakhtinian theory, the conditions of dominance are not fixed, although language is still the central site of communication. This allows for gender to be:

> *in a context where male, female and the different forms of genderless structures can be seen in their plurality. (Diaz-Diocaretz, 1989:126)*

As a theory of culture as well as a theory of language, Bakhtin's work deals with the borderlines of genres, including life. He therefore dismisses linguistic dichotomies, such as the differences between the signifier and the signified, the language and its social practice, to challenge Saussure and the fetishism of rationality. From Bakhtin also comes the theory that language is always in motion and that its potential is always in the future. This is because of the unclosed nature of discourse and the cultural nature of its own production:

> *Language ... lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's... language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others.* (Bakhtin, 1981:293-4)

The language of the schoolgirls, and the language of the 'me' who wrote this dissertation are thus intersubjectively constructed, each in relation to our own cultural contexts. This idea will be discursively developed by my thesis as I also introduce notions of the intra-subjectivities of our 'individual' psyches. To use Bakhtin's terminology, I shall explore the nature of the 'dialogic' to resist the constraints of the split between the verbal and the extra-verbal. The dialogic nature of language, as different from a monologic nature, is exemplified in the data I have collected, in the qualities of my writing of this dissertation and in the theoretical positionings I take in Chapter 5.

> ***A feminist critical vision has to work precisely at the site where the speaking or writing subject - in its dialogic nature - is grounded or from which it is interacting, whether embedded with patriarchal notions or not*** . (Diaz-Diocaretz, 1989:135)

Thus I present not a girl-and-other critique of patriarchy, but many voices in dialogue with each other bounded by space and time.

Feminist Theories

The division of feminist theories into liberal, radical and socialist (Kenway and Modra 1989, Yates 1987:235), seems not to appear in recent Northern hemisphere debates. Alcoff (1988) sees the current theoretical grouping to be concerned with cultural feminism and poststructuralism; De Lauretis (1990b) asks why there must now be a division and a labelling at all. In this thesis, my interest in a culture of school girls is not signalling allegiance to the position of cultural feminists (Daly 1978, Rich 1979), who propose a female counter-culture as different from definitions of femininity produced by men. Cultural feminists, according to Alcoff, are focussing not on subjectivity but on the historical and essentialist problems of male supremacy. This is not my intention, and my working definition of femininity is not a comparison with masculinity, but simply a descriptor of 'that which is female.'

Subjectivity is a central concern of feminist poststructuralists and of my thesis. The poststructuralist position on the self/subject is that it is constructed through discourse. I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

In poststructuralist theories:

> *The subject is the generic term used in philosophy for what in lay terms would be "the person", "individual" or "human being", and what in psychology is referred to as "the individual".* (Henriques et al. 1984:2-3)

The focus on subjectivity has led to some feminists re-thinking agency as central to change, action and self. Seen in this way:

> *Agents are the bearers of specific culturally acquired and publicly available competencies, often called roles in sociology... The concept of agent should be contrasted with the concept of the subject which belongs to the philosophy of individualism, that individuals, and not social processes, are the origins of people's actions.* (Bulbeck 1993:451)

Walkerdine (1984:205) says 'we confirm ourselves as masculine and feminine in accordance with frames of reference which are themselves socially produced.' As Hollway (1984:261) points out this is not the same as the position given to the subject and the object in traditional grammar. In this dissertation I use the term 'subject' to mean 'person' but not to imply an individualist conception of power, as in Bulbeck's distinction. Subjectivity by this definition is self positioning or self-awareness, but an awareness which is constructed by the practices operating in schooling and in the family which position participants in discourse. Via discourse, the subject may be constructed as passive or as active. Thus:

> *The passive, docile subject endures subjugation* [and] *stifles the possibility of rising up against the oppressor. (Walkerdine, 1990:55)*

This, in psychoanalytic terms, says Walkerdine, is the displacement of the subject. It contrasts with the active challenges which some schoolgirls make of the teacher and of the curriculum. In some cases these challenges can come through the curriculum discourses themselves; at other times they come through what the curriculum discourse defines as deviant behaviour. Walkerdine (1990:50-51) says of such openly defiant girls that 'their confidence lies in their claim to the phallus.' The thesis follows Walkerdine (1990:32), who rejects 'the idea of an autonomous agent who attributes feelings to him- or herself' rather than seeing such feelings as constructed by the discourses she encounters.

Other feminists theorists too have grappled with the issue of resistance and girls as subjects. Socialist theorists see schools as sites of ideological reproduction (Wolpe 1988), but socialist feminism, following Althusser, 'leaves little room for human agency or resistance' (Weiler, 1988:32). New definitions of resistance need to consider its place within the everyday and between people.

> *While traditionally the concept of resistance has been used to describe public counter-school or antisocial actions, there is an emerging view that this definition is inadequate to explain or understand the lives of girls or women.* (Weiler, 1988:40)

My research attempts to study not resistance of particular ideological structures but the complexities of lived resistances.

In questioning the Ruralsville girls' resistances I am not beginning, as did McRobbie (1978), with my awareness of capitalism and patriarchy and seeking their exemplification from amongst my data. I ask with Weiler:

> *Can school become a possible "public sphere" for the encouragement of resistance and the building of a critical counter hegemony for girls?* (Weiler, 1988:52)

If school is such a place, I ask if this is so because it is where girls write. My thesis involves not a theorization of schooling, but a theorization of writing and its discursive potential. Without wanting comparisons with boys, I attempt to show why girls act/write in the ways that they do and what gendered messages they give and are given. In this way I ally myself with Walkerdine and Davies in trying to produce 'some on-going counter-critique' (Yates 1993:90) as a theory of resistance. This is different from being directly concerned with the resistance skills needed to oppose domination, as is the research of Weiler, Arnot, Weiner, Kenway and Modra (in Yates 1993:90).

In focussing on the heroines of popular fiction, Christian-Smith (1990:9) considers their resistance to what she calls 'patterns of domination'. Here the domination usually comes from males. Vicariously resisting boyfriends' sexual advances, resisting magazine-type beautification and resisting the authority of fathers allowed girl readers to 'construct reality as they would like it to be' (1990:112). In this way resistance became a way of desiring or dreaming 'a different present and future', as girl readers identified with heroines. As a development of this theorizing, my thesis questions the place of desire.

Following Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer (1990), resistance can also be considered as a result of a range of psychological tensions.

> *For girls to remain responsive to themselves, they resist the conventions of feminine goodness; to remain responsive to others, they must resist the values placed on self-sufficiency and independence in north American culture. Thus for girls to develop a clear sense of self in relationship with others means ... to take on the problem of resistance and also to take up the question of what relationship means to themselves, to others and to the world.* (Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer, 1990:9-10)

Here resistance theory is linked to cultural constructs and bounds to create dual possibilities for girls. Additionally, resistance is considered together with theories of relationships between people. A question I ask is: how is a resistance theory, which is based on object relations like this (Gilligan, Chodorow), different from psycnoanalytic theories based on the repressions of the sub-conscious (Lacan, Irigaray)? Differences between object-relations theorists themselves seem to be that Chodorow (1974:51) focuses on the negatives of 'the repression and devaluation of femininity on both psychological and cultural levels'; and Gilligan et al (1990) consider the positives of what girls do for themselves.

Feminist research in education is a growing field (Davies 1990b, Gilbert 1989c, Moss 1989, Patterson 1989, Steedman 1982, Walkerdine and Lucey 1989, Wolpe 1988), but few 'non-education' feminists are academically concerned with girls. The ignoring of girls is despite Firestone's (1970:81-118) statement that women's liberation will not be achieved until 'children's' liberation advances. It appears that only those feminists who once worked as school teachers have taken this admonition seriously, although McRobbie (1978:96) clearly pointed out the omission of girls from feminism.

Throughout the range of issues and theories relating to the construction of femininity in girls there is a considerable amount of information missing. Especially, there are gaps in research findings about younger girls and how they develop. Even deciding what to call the age-group is problematic. Steedman (1982) called the girls in her study 'little', but the girls in my study rejected the diminutive, with its overtones of condescension, lovable triviality and comparison with the unknown qualities of 'bigness'. 'Young' girls can also mean adolescent girls, which they were not, so I settled at most times for 'primary school' girls, which is more verbose than I wanted it to be, and which fails to capture the fact that my research relationship with them operated outside of school hours and settings as well as inside them. Defining girlhood in any case is problematic, as the feminist movement has found speaking for all women to be (Alcoff 1988:405).

Ending

This chapter has introduced the research project in a variety of ways. It presents the theoretical assumptions driving it into its own particular methodology, and it indicates the theoretical questions to be explored. To do so it introduces a range of discourses and positionings, introduces each of the girls and points to the issues underlying the thesis.

With Chapter 2 I move the thesis into its discussions of the poststructuralist theories and possibilities which are central to it. An early draft of Chapter 2 was more like a dictionary of terms than a sequentially arranged set of arguments or ideas leading towards my own presentations of research findings. The process of working through the mass of conflicting uses of words, the omissions and the constantly appearing new material must be every PhD student's nightmare. And discarding discipline-based reading practices opens up the entire English language international inter-library loan system. For those of us working from the southern hemisphere this brings problems unknown to our UK and

USA counterparts, as we endeavour to get through not only our own national research output but each of theirs as well. The version of Chapter 2 that appears in this dissertation is the result of much struggle and much deletion from computer files. Writing a poststructuralist thesis based on life-texts has seemed to be a contradiction of terms. Many times I have wished I had stuck to linguistics or gone over to literary criticism instead of persevering in a project like this.

As my descriptions of the research data will include some feminist psychoanalyses, I conclude Chapter 2 with theoretical discussions and descriptions of the psychoanalytic theories which will later relate to my readings of the girls' writing.

CHAPTER TWO

POSTSTRUCTURALIST THEORIES AND POSSIBILITIES

In this chapter I attempt to define and exemplify some of my key terms, specifically those that are constituted within the discourses of poststructuralisms. This highlights their semantic instability and the changing nature of theoretical discourses. It may also explain some of the confusions, contradictions and overlaps within the theoretical fields.

There will be two parts to this chapter: poststructuralist theories and psychoanalytic theories. This is further broken down so that the first part also discusses discourse, deconstruction and semiotics. The second part discusses feminist psychoanalytic theories, desire, fantasy and symbol/symbolic.

My placement of terms in separate sections does not claim fixedness. Similarly, my definitions of these terms do not always lie within poststructuralist theories. My selection of which theorist's work to discuss in these sections relates to the thesis I shall develop. My discussions and my explanations of terms will not be concluded until the end of this chapter. I hope that this proviso preempts the problems that necessarily arise when one term must be used to consider another.

1. Poststructuralist Theories

The Ruralsville research works with the poststructuralist engagements with regulatory practices. These practices are those that relate the girls to gender. As I present my descriptions of the data (Chapter 4) I try to develop feminist poststructuralisms. My purpose in this chapter is to show that the distinctive point about poststructuralist theory is that it does not assume a meta-theory of causation. In this way it is radically different from structuralism, which uses meta-theory to organize and prioritize conflicting frames of reference. In the next chapter (Chapter 3) I explain deconstruction and my particular pragmatics in detail.

Post-structuralisms are theoretical approaches whereby a range of apparently conflicting frames of knowledge can be organized without hierarchies. It is in no sense binary, and this immediately puts it at odds with most of so-called 'Western' logic and philosophy. In poststructuralist theories there can be many others, not just one. This contrasts with theories of ideology where logic prevails and what is other is denounced. Both ideology critique and poststructuralist theory look beyond text. Ideology critique looks for what interest is being concealed and furthered by the text; poststructuralist theory looks for how historical and interested truth-effects are being produced.

As I see the situation, many theoretical combinations of structuralism and poststructuralism can exist as a continuum, as a dialogue and as both. For example, many forms of sociolinguistics are not particularly structuralist (Holmes 1992:1-17). These have strong leanings towards sociology but still retain some of their linguistic emphasis on rationality and controlled frameworks (Coates 1986, Kramarae 1986).

According to Cherryholmes (1988:19-40), structuralism operates through the binary divisions of grammatical subjects and objects, of theory and practice, of word and concept, (the Saussurean linguistic division of signifier and signified), of language and speech (the Saussurean divisions of *langue* and *parole*). In this way, structuralism in linguistics cannot deal with the referents of non-linguistic phenomena. Any position, however, is limited in terms of what it can research, as Foucault has very specifically acknowledged. As I understand it, structuralism in the social sciences refers to a consistent ordered relation between social phenomena and some causal mechanism: for example, Freud's structuring of the unconscious.

The structuring of structuralist analyses, which base themselves on the binary oppositions of grammatical subjects and objects, has the capacity to argue from a feminist viewpoint for replacing unacceptable dominant structures with others. Examples include the demasculinization of pronouns and nouns seen as universal, the equitable positioning of girls and women represented in published text and in public and private life, and the abolition of marriage-related titles for women. Structuralist critique is particularly useful as feminist research in that it makes visible the sexist ideologies of text, for in patriarchal discourses and texts these are silenced.

Researchers following the poststructuralist analytics of Foucault (1970, 1978, 1982) isolate and identify overall power effects. Foucault shows how to theorize power, particularly at the level of micropractices and from the point of view of a history of the present. Instead of producing a theory of subjectivity, Foucault explores the discursive practices which constitute the subject. From this he explores forms of power to give a history of the present (Harrison, 1991:84). The format of my developing thesis will be guided by this principle as I work towards various readings of data. Foucault's theory intersects with feminist theory in that both identify the body as a site of power, both focus on local operations, both see discourse as the producer of power and both criticize the privilege Western humanism has given to a masculine élite proclaiming universal truths (Diamond and Quinby 1988:x).

Foucault warns against totalizing theories which appear to resolve contradictions through cohesive explanations. This, he says, leaves explanation as final, when it can only ever be partial. In his later work (Foucault 1978), practice is considered more fundamental than theory. This for me points to a research model that emphasizes the pragmatics of everyday events, both as a field for study and as a basis for inscribing theory.

A second form of poststructuralism is taken by Derrida (1976, 1987, 1991). The two central arguments of Derrida's poststructuralism are that meaning is dispersed throughout language/texts and that such meanings are deferred in time. In linguistic terms the signifiers and the signifieds of Derrida's poststructuralism operate by repeatedly turning into each other. Derrida (1991) says that as a result of this, meaning is constantly deferred in deconstructive readings. We can never quite see meaning, because it always appears to be on the next page or in the sentence to come. We constantly imagine ourselves as being on the brink.

Another result of the endless play between the signified and the signifier, is that meaning exists as a function of differences between the words in a text, or the gestures in a set of customs. The French word *différence* conveys both of the meanings named in English as differing and deferring. The notion of deferring informs us only that the meaning of a text is already subverted by its own language. The language itself forces lack of resolution on the reader. No matter how many readings are made, the matter of meaning cannot be resolved. This seemingly double negative of poststructuralism appears to leave us in a position of constantly trying, of running hard and never getting there. I shall be exploring this form of poststructuralism by questioning how written language, both mine and the girls', operates in relation to shifting subjectivities.

Steedman's (1982:85-131) analysis of the shared writing of a small group of young girls can be seen as a feminist poststructuralism after Foucault in that it produces a history and a politics of the present and of the past for her girl writers. She shows that girls today and girls last century show their learning of their social worlds by their writing. In this way they use their writing to describe themselves and their socializations:

> *Only silence within literature, politics, history and sociology bears witness to the experiences of the children's mothers, which, in writing their story, Carla, Lindie and Melissa attempted to comprehend and assess.* (Steedman, 1982:90)

Davies' analysis (Davies 1989b:43-69) of pre-school children's understanding of feminist stories, and hence of gendered positionings, could be seen as discursive in the Derridean tradition in that it is a series of different readings from a range of perspectives, none of which is given final authority. Davies presented feminist stories to 'children' and then described girls' and boys' understandings of the stories. In not pointing to any 'true' reading of a story Davies shows that there are many possibilities in them. Thus the narrative of *The Paper Bag Princess* is not what it appears to be at first sight:

> *In this story Elizabeth is not a unitary being. She experiences the multiple and contradictory subject positionings we each experience in our everyday lives.*
> (Davies, 1989b:59)

The links I have just made between Davies' and Steedman's feminist research and Foucault's and Derrida's non-feminist theories highlight one of the problems for feminist scholarship. The problem is to what extent bondings to theoretical fathers must be made (Grosz 1988). Feminism can argue that there is a redundance of theory if we must describe the roots of non-feminist poststructuralism whenever we theorize. However, as ways of developing analyses of data I hope to show (in Chapter 4) how re-considering Derrida's and Foucault's deconstructions can inform feminist practice.

According to Weedon (1987:12), poststructuralist theory may help to explain why women and girls tolerate 'social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men'. The deconstructings I shall make of the Ruralsville data (Chapter 4) will function as a series of searches into the mechanisms used by the girls as they discursively take up various positions regarding femininity.

There are problems with this, particularly regarding the lack of establishment of methodology, which I shall discuss in Chapter 3. Theoretically, there are also problems with how to be poststructuralist. De Lauretis (1990b:259), for example, is not so convinced of the elevation of feminist poststructuralism. She calls it 'this latecomer, poststructuralist feminism, dark horse and winner of the feminist theory contest.' De

Lauretis (1990b:261) criticises the 'reductive oppositions' which mark theories as poststructuralist or not poststructuralist, and place (singular?) feminist practice as separate from such theory.

Thinking by mutually oppositional categories is firmly entrenched in academic discourses, including the feminist and the poststructuralist: De Lauretis (1990b) shows us that even Alcoff (1988) resorts to this strategy. In place of such categorized theorizing, De Lauretis suggests:

> *a developing theory of the female-embodied social subject that is based on its specific, emergent and conflictual history.* (De Lauretis, 1990b:267)

Locating oneself as a feminist theorist can be seen by this to be as difficult as locating oneself as any other subject of/in discourse. The non-unified subject placed amongst theories makes non-rational choices, takes up agency, resists, fluctuates and changes. At the same time she is also persuaded by evidence and logic. What I shall attempt to do is not to simply free-float in my own discursive production, but to provide a sense of historical and material location which is the context of the subject. This is, theoretically, why I worked at the primary school at Ruralsville.

From poststructuralist theory I take up conflicting frames of knowledge, the discursive production of historical effects through language and a series of enquiries into the construction/constitution of the subject. Specifically, this should allow me to make some theoretical speculations from the level of the micropractices at the school. In particular, poststructuralist theories allow for a textual play with writing and meanings, so that the play itself generates knowledge and possibilities.

Another problem is that in being eclectic and selecting from a range of poststructuralist possibilities, not everything can be understood. This means that gaps in theoretical knowledge lead to misconceptions that annoy the initiated and bewilder the would-be poststructuralist. This is a serious problem, and one which must be addressed if poststructuralist theories are not to be reduced to a hopeless jumble of low-level verbiage.

The possibility in poststructuralist theory, for me, is that I may be able to show a little of how meanings are deferred throughout language and texts over time. Secondly I may be able to demonstrate shifting subjectivities in relation to writing by focussing on a specific place (Ruralsville), with its own conflictual histories and discourses.

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Discourse

A reason for studying discourse is to deconstruct the politics of power and assumed knowledge. Discourse in poststructuralist theory is an historically produced frame which sets up what can be said and not said. It is not simply about values produced, but about the producing of discursive effects by its own historical terms. This is not the commonsense usage of 'discourse', which is taken to be synonymous with 'text' (Barrett 1991:125-126). Because of definitional confusions within the fields of literacy and linguistics I discuss these before dealing with poststructuralist positions regarding discourse.

Within literacy pedagogy, the term 'discourse' is used in a confusing variety of ways. Dixon (1967:177) for example, used it to mean a mode of language, and his meaning has remained in circulation. In his 'personal growth' model of language Dixon says that 'oral discourse operates ideologically', implying that spoken language is itself a discourse. This is far from a poststructuralist understanding of the term.

Feminist poststructuralists are not immune to inheriting this definitional problem if they work within literacy parameters, as Gilbert (1988:175,177,168) shows. Here she writes of 'classroom discourse', 'literary discourse' and 'the discourse of English pedagogy' as if each is singular and generic. As poststructuralists understand discourse it is not about genre or about topic, but about sets of knowledges and power. Hence there cannot be a discourse 'on' girls' self-esteem (Gilbert 1988:168), but only discourses which construct it and discourses which theorize it.

Literacy pedagogy in Australia is also influenced by discourse definitions from linguistics (Christie 1989), and as I indicated in the Preface, my initial theoretical understanding of gender was that language (as defined by linguists) operates to make meanings (Poynton 1985). This theory (from Halliday 1978, 1985a) considers the systemic linguistic features of what Halliday calls 'discourse'. This is yet another use of the term. Halliday's 'field of discourse' would appear to refer to the institutional setting of the Ruralsville school and the topics about which the girls wrote; his 'tenor of discourse' to refer to the relationships between the writers and the readers; and his 'mode of discourse' to refer to the choices the writers made about how, and in what genre, they would write their texts. Researching discourse as a poststructuralist activity, however, is not the same as theorizing features of a linguistic system, which is necessarily a structuralist activity.

'Discourse' as understood by linguists, and educators following linguists, means the texts/language they analyse (Christie 1989); whereas for poststructuralists 'discourse' has many meanings beyond language, and involves complex and multiple meanings and possibilities. Within ideology critique, now becoming influential within literacy pedagogy:

> *relationships between ideology, language and discourse are being explored as key areas of social theory and linguistic inquiry* [although] *linguistic theorizing itself ... constitutes a discourse which may represent and work in the service of particular dominant interests.* (Luke and Walton, 1993:418)

Whilst I agree with Luke and Walton about the functioning of linguistics, and their understanding of discourse seems to be in line with poststructuralist understandings, they retain the notion of ideology which I am rejecting. The poststructuralist theory I wish to adopt is not about competing discourses and hierarchically organized ideologies, though I believe that discourse and language are key areas. Ideology critique, sometimes called 'critical literacy', appears here to be between what I understand as poststructuralist theory and traditional literacy positions. Other readers may see it as another poststructuralism.

Poststructuralist theories show that identities are always produced through discourses; and further, that the construction of self/agency can only be achieved through access to particular discourses. This follows from Foucault (1970), who showed that language cannot allow direct access to meanings. According to Foucault, all that language contains are representations of discourses and critiques. Knowledge, he says, is a form of discourse and:

> *language begins not with expression, but with discourse... Language is, wholly and entirely, discourse; and it is so by virtue of this singular power of the word to leap across the system of signs towards the being of that which is signified.*
>
> (Foucault, 1970:92-4)

From Foucault's work we see that discourse operates as a form of power, and that a discourse literally and metaphorically inscribes individuals and collectives. These inscriptions are the topic of my dissertation, which deals with the metaphoric and the literal in what the girls wrote. Barrett (1991 125-126) says that 'Foucault's use of the concept of discourse is very much related to *context*'. This means that the question of how one particular statement appears, rather than another, is a function of discourse. Following this, I take up Bulbeck's definition of discourse as:

> *a term developed by Michel Foucault, but now used somewhat loosely to apply to a body of more or less coherent ideas and practices which relate to specific institutional sites, which have a set of outcomes, and to which a set of social actors subscribe.* (Bulbeck, 1993:456)

This is in line with Middleton, who says in her chapter on 'the sociology of women's education as discourse':

> *Foucault used the term "discourse" to conceptualize theories in action. As Dorothy Smith (1987:214) has explained, a discourse is like "a conversation mediated by texts that is not a matter of statements alone but of actual ongoing practices and sites of practices."* (Middleton, 1993:49)

The concept of discourse, within feminist poststructuralist theories, allows for links between the past and the present, sites and actions, people and texts. Over this are the discursive effects which make meanings themselves different for different people, different times and different places.

As I shall show, each subject also differs within herself, according to particular discourses currently being taken up from particular fields. These discursive fields:

> *consist of competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and practices.* (Weedon, 1987:35)

In Chapter 4 I explore various deconstructive strategies of uncovering ways by which discursive fields are hidden.

The poststructuralist concept of discourse thus is central to key poststructuralist assumptions regarding the historical productions of self/agency and of language. These productions are not simply formed in interaction with other people, but because of the particular discursive fields allowing for various discursive colonizations of contemporary life. Thus the discourses we have knowledge of provide the range of possible subject positions we may assume. What discourse theories have not shown yet is why subjects adopt some discourses in preference to others and what happens when a range of conflicting discourses operate within the same discursive field.

Here I am guided by Davies' (1990b) identification of various discursive practices from which women's and girls' positionings can be understood. Davies (1989c) locates and theorizes the 'discursive production of the male/female dualism in school settings' and produces her findings from a feminist poststructuralist series of framings. From such framings, Davies (1991:45) can describe 'goodness' as 'something desired by many women, being fundamental to the cultural narratives through which femaleness is constituted'.

What I shall try to do is devise a series of framings through which I can theoretically locate discourses of girlhood. Following Grosz (1990b:63) and Davies (1993), I intend also looking for signs beyond language, and these may include bodies. Grosz suggests that discourse is a material set of processes whereby physical bodies also are inscribed with 'attributes of subjectivity.' In this way, physical movements, positionings and sounds are also important in the construction of personhood. Applied to Davies' (1991) notion of goodness this could suggest that the girls make their own bodies a site for regulatory practices of varying forms of goodness and of the resistance of goodness.

As a substantive example of my discourse reading, Walkerdine (1990:76) shows that within a classroom discourse of niceness and helpfulness, anger and conflict are displaced. Based on her research of child-centred pedagogy, Walkerdine theorizes that conflict is displaced into rational argument so it can then be read as a positive. In this way Walkerdine deconstructs rationalism, which is in line with humanism, and which sees the mastery of the universe as related to its own discourse of rationality. Within this discourse, femininity is constructed as the Other. Poststructuralism deconstructs these fictions by reading these discursively produced facts as fantasies. Within differing discourses, different positions of power operate. Appropriating or changing a discourse, together with its sets of discursive practices, are ways of gaining power.
By studying writing and its production I will attempt to theorize a range of gendered discourses, and in this way to follow Foucault, who shows how power is effectively camouflaged by its positioning in discourse. As a group, the girls engaged in the regulating practices of the school. As subjects, I question how/if they become agents for themselves and for each other. Within the position I adopt, gender is seen as produced by a number of discourses in conjunction and contradiction. In this way gender becomes a site of the power-effects of discourses.

Humanists and poststructuralists differently understand the functions of language and discourse, rational thought and desire, socialization and dualism, continuity and discontinuity, fictional narrative and lived reality. Within humanism, personal identity is usually seen as continuous, unified, rational and coherent. (Of course I am voicing what is becoming the conventional poststructuralist view of humanism. In practice this is more

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likely to be an ambition or a pretence.) Here language is a tool with which the world is described, and rational linguistic processes are triumphant over lack of coherence and irrationality.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is one of the methodologies arising from post-structuralist theory. Deconstructions are poststructuralist ways of examining discourses and texts as operating in relation to each other. They involve reading and describing without limiting the number of possible interpretations, being reconstructive rather than destructive. In Chapter 3 I provide detailed discussion and exemplification regarding my uses of deconstruction in this thesis. Now I introduce deconstruction as a concept related to poststructuralist theory. I also discuss some of its problems and values for my research.

Derrida's use of deconstruction is based on Heidegger's philosophical question of being, and translates as 'a delicate process of loosening or unbuilding' (Hart 1991:55). This is what I shall be trying to do with the Ruralsville data (Chapter 4).

Weedon (1987:165) warns that whilst deconstruction's stress on the non-fixity of meaning is important, it may serve to reaffirm the patriarchal status quo if such deconstructions make invisible the social powers which contextualize discursive texts. This implies that Derrida's ways of deconstructing by revealing differences and deferrals will not by themselves be adequate as constructs for feminist theory. For this reason, Weedon advises feminist researchers/theorists to link the work of Derrida to the work of Foucault to retain the focus on power/knowledge, history and production (1987:165). I shall be attempting to put this advice into practice with my analyses/descriptions of the research data and its consequent theorizing, although my leaning is towards Derrida.

In describing approaches to the production of criticism, Cherryholmes (1988) points to two forms of post-structuralist analysis. One is based on the work of Foucault (1978,1982,1984) and the other is based on the work of Derrida (1976,1987,1991).

> *In a Foucauldian genre, criticism produces histories and politics of the present, wherein texts and discourse-practices are the effects of the exercise of power. In a Derridean deconstruction, criticism exposes silences and gaps between that which is valued and disvalued, traces the sedimentation of meanings, and documents contradictions and ambiguities within texts and discourses-practices.*
>
> (Cherryholmes, 1988:160)

Further:

> *Poststructural analysis points beyond structure, utility and instrumentality. Our ability to shape and design the social world can be enhanced, I hope, if we outline, examine, analyse, interpret, criticize, and evaluate the texts and discourse-practices that surround us.* (Cherryholmes, 1988:177)

Specifically, this means that following Foucault may allow me to produce, as a deconstruction, a particular history of the present of the Ruralsville school. By this deconstruction the effects of power concerning gender and femininity may be able to be seen. Following Derrida may allow me to produce, as a deconstruction, a documentation of what is between the usually unseen and the unsaid: the double meanings and the choices. By this deconstruction the constructions of subjectivities and the never-ending play of language may be able to be seen as inter-weaving.

All of this sounds impossibly ambitious I know. The most I can manage to do is point my work in these directions by engaging in relevant theoretical matters, carefully considering my data and then producing provocative writing for this dissertation. In Chapter 3 I say what specific use I make of various forms of deconstruction and what I take from Foucault and from Derrida, amongst other deconstructionists. My descriptions of the discursive formations which comprise the research data are based on what was written and spoken at the school. This will lead to considerations of the intradiscursive, the interdiscursive and the extradiscursive (Barrett 1991:129) as ways of dealing with the empirical question of power/knowledge relations. As a text, what I produce is not to be regarded as true for all time, but as an indication of a process of working theory.

Deconstruction not only provides a means of analysis, however. It operates as subversive politics in that it has the ability to 'transcend Western logocentric epistomologies' (Branson and Miller 1991:43). To constantly displace meaning is to disclose the function of a text, and in this way deconstruction is a different way of thinking and a challenge for research. It makes possible multi-meanings rather than uni-meaning, chaos rather than systems, and new directions for meanings rather than the following of established routes. Particularly, deconstruction is about discourses rather than neatly framed pre-given texts.

One of the problems in researching as a deconstructionist is the broad scope in the interpretation of meaning. This is because in deconstructive reading we read not at the level of text but at the level of discourse, and this involves bringing into play our own subjective understandings. If I take Grosz's (1990c) direction here I would follow neither Foucault nor Derrida. Rather I would devise my own deconstructions from feminist performative writings such as Irigaray's (1985). However, the conventions of academic textual practices simply do not allow for all kinds of freedoms, although there is still space for writing's surprising pleasures.

In producing text which functions deconstructively there is a further problem in what to call it. Gilbert (1987a:248) calls the deconstructive critiques of Derrida, Barthes and Foucault 'readings'. She qualifies this by saying of deconstructions:

> *Such critiques seek to read in ways other than what seems natural, universal and self-evident in order to show that what may seem given is but a cultural construct.*
> (Gilbert, 1987a:248)

Following Derrida, my deconstructions are intended to lead to a study of what may otherwise be bypassed. Following Gilbert, I seek to uncover what appears to be 'natural' in cultural constructions.

A confusion in calling a deconstruction a 'reading' comes from the wide-spread understanding, within literary pedagogy, of reader-response theory. This theory holds that different readers/people will read the same narrative in ways that are different from each other. This is not the same theory as poststructuralist theory, which would hold that the same reader can make many different readings/interpretations from the one narrative.

Within literary pedagogy, Patterson (1989) says reader-response techniques have become popular in secondary school classrooms as a way of validating each student's opinion and of demysticizing literary canons. Gilbert describes this as a relief from the struggle with:

> *the traditional "decoding" or "unravelling the mystery" aspects of literary study in schools.* (Gilbert, 1987a:237)

Later, she says that reading is not an innocent activity:

> *Readers are situated in culturally determined discursive traditions, and the effects of these traditions determine the nature of the reading a text will be given and the meaning assigned to it.* (Gilbert 1987a:245)

This appears to put deconstructive reading in line with reader-response theories, which as I see the situation is not so. Gilbert (1987a:234) says that reader-response theories tell many 'stories of reading'. By allying herself with reader-response theory (Gilbert 1987a:234), and by producing major work on writing, schooling and deconstruction (Gilbert 1989c), we are confused into believing they might be the same.

Here I met one of my earlier methodological but theoretically driven problems. If I told many stories about my research data would this count as deconstruction? I believe now that it would not. Accordingly, my analyses of the research data are not 'stories of reading' in the reader-response sense. This is because they are not about different readers/people making meanings different from each other; they are about the same reader/person making different readings according to which discursive field informs the reading. In this way shifting subjectivity can be the focus, rather than comparisons between individuals/subjects and subsequent classroom strategies for literary literacy. Whilst deconstructions are qualitatively different from reader-response positions, however, they do not deny them.

As a way of understanding how literary texts operate (Barthes 1975a, 1981), deconstruction unravels the threads making up meaning. Such unravelling has led to radical critique of the meanings of literary writing and the acceptance of lack of fixedness in such texts. Readers of writing can by this be as important to the potential of the text as the writer is. This is not a reader-response position if a reader is seen as a poststructuralist subject capable of producing changing, conflicting and simultaneous meanings at once. In reader-response theory, different readers each make their own singular meanings; in poststructuralist theory the reading subjects themselves are fragmented.

Because of these two theories, the importance of theories of the writer as interpreter of the meanings of the text have waned (Barthes 1977:142-148). I am not challenging this shift away from writer intent; but stressing the importance of the writing for the writer who produced it. In doing so I am trying to challenge the binary oppositions of structuralism (Grosz 1991:13) by providing forms of analyses which are capable of being understood in a variety of ways, so that no one ultimate 'truth' is proven. This lack of final fixation is what aggravates structuralists, who want to focus on solutions, coagulations and labels.

The traditional literary practice of making assumptions about a writer's positioning on the basis of what that writer writes, is based on language theories of reflection. This practice was challenged by critical theorists who questioned meanings on the basis of Marxist theories of production (Belsey 1980, Johnson 1980) and set the scene for

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poststructuralism. Reflective theories mean that what a writer means or knows is seen as accurately reflected in the writings that they produce.

Poststructuralisms have offered alternatives to literary theories since deconstruction practices gained strength in American literary establishments (Johnson, in Salusinszky, 1987. Spivak 1976), as a direct result of French initiatives (Barthes 1973, Derrida 1976, Foucault 1972). Applying deconstructions beyond the fields of literature, to the social sciences, has been a more recent phenomenon (Adams 1990, Game 1993, Scott 1990, Walkerdine 1984b). Following Barthes, Derrida and Foucault, deconstructive readings must be constantly innovative in order for a progression of meanings to open up. Some deconstructionists acknowledge Derrida (Spivak 1985, Johnson 1987), some acknowledge Derrida and feminism as well (Cixous 1980, Gilbert 1989c, Grosz 1988, Irigaray 1991, Lather 1991b), and some acknowledge Foucault and feminism (Barrett 1991, Diamond and Quinby 1988, Flax 1990b, Luke, C. 1990, Walkerdine 1990).

For feminists, the initial realization of discourses of patriarchy, which led to what was known as 'consciousness raising', functioned as deconstructions of their own life narratives. The current focus on autobiography can be seen as a means by which this deconstruction can be accomplished (Brodsky and Schenck 1988, Stanley 1990:125-158). In addition, women's experience of deconstruction has often been because of their positioning as other, and their need to see more than one point of view (Johnson, in Salusinszky, 1987:169). Harding says that:

> *by giving up the goal of telling "one true story" we embrace instead the permanent partiality of feminist inquiry.'* (Harding, 1986:194)

Here feminism is in line with postmodernism.

Game (1989) and Opie (1989) believe feminist deconstructing means looking for the shifts in meanings women make. This involves working analytically at the rupture points between discourses and asking why it is that subjects choose one set of meanings and not another. As a feminist research methodology, deconstruction has been a strategy for analysis across a range of discourses. In not claiming definitive readings of texts, deconstructionists work to challenge dominant systems and structures (Grosz 1990a, Walkerdine 1990).

In summary, deconstruction is not destructive; ultimately it is constructive, as eventually new meanings are made by readers, and these meanings go beyond what was intended by the writer. Poststructuralists use deconstruction as a strategy of analysis of social meanings, signs, symbols and text. Hence deconstruction is always about the analysis of discourse. A feminist poststructuralist theory of the Ruralsville research data, which is language construed as discourse, allows for the theorizing of subjectivity as the site of disunity and conflict. This is far removed from the humanist concept of the conscious, knowing, unified and rational subject. The writer/speaker of discursive texts can not herself secure the meaning of what she says or writes.

Before beginning the second half of this chapter and discussing deconstructive possibilities in psychoanalysis, I introduce the concept of semiotics.

Semiotics

Semiotics is 'the science of signs and meanings' (Henriques 1984:212), and it is sometimes described as the successor to structuralism (Culler 1982:22). In this way, semiotics appears to be an interim step to poststructuralist theory. Seen as links to the unconscious, semiotics may be a step towards psychoanalysis. In deconstructively reading the girls' writing I consider the signs and symbols of representation. This involves the possibility of meaning being other than the way at appears at the literal level.

Semiotics cannot be fully taken up by linguistics as I understand it, as linguistics sees all representation as contained in language/linguistic texts. Although Halliday (1978:8) calls language a social semiotic, he leaves non-linguistics out of his analyses. He sees language as the central means by which the 'social man' (sic) is transmitted, and through which 'the child' learns to act as member of society. This view of transmission is a structuralist view and ignores the idea that the semiotics which inform language also inform non-linguistic meaning-making through particular and sometimes different signs and symbols.

I see semiotics as operating also through non-verbals, through visuals and gaps, through sounds and silences, through nuances and implications. Most poststructuralist theorists appear to avoid the term 'semiotics', as such meanings for them are included in the notion of discourse. However, for Threadgold (1990:18), semiotic and discursive systems together give meaning to words and terms. She says it is discourse and semiotics together which enable language to function, and through which the positioning and construction of subjects happens continuously. My current understanding of discourse is that the term 'semiotics' is redundant. However, I present a little of semiotics' discursive history here as I intend incorporating into my thesis some of its theories.

Feminists referring to semiotics are likely to follow Kristeva's (1986) work, which places the semiotic in opposition to the symbolic in psychoanalytic terms. This binary and structuralist framework presents the symbolic as language, and therefore masculine, because of Lacan's understanding of the symbolic order. (I shall be explaining this psychoanalytic framework in the next section of this chapter.) Kristeva sees the semiotic as Other to the symbolic order of language and therefore feminine. This leads to a search for the semiotics of women's writing, for example, as indicators of a repressed femininity.

From my reading of Kristeva I have many questions, most of which I cannot even touch on in this dissertation. In summary, Kristeva (1986) theorizes that the symbolic ordering of language, and with it the psycho-sexual, implies the patriarchal order. Following this line of theorizing means trying to get beyond the signs of language (the symbolic order) to the signs of the unconscious (the semiotic) before it was repressed by patriarchy. For Kristeva, the form of signification that applies to the pre-symbolic, or pre-Oedipal phase, is the feminine aspect of semiotics.

In this way Kristeva's feminist theory is one of radical difference rather than of poststructuralisms. Semiotics, for Kristeva, represents a challenge to the patriarchal symbolic order by means of its non-verbal signs. Such non-verbal signs include physical proximities, movements, clothes and tones of voice. In writing, semiotics engage writers and readers in meanings made from gaps, innuendos, physicalities of words, structures of narratives. Kristeva theorizes a feminine semiotics as different from the masculine (non-semiotic) symbolic order. This is a structuralist view which dichotomizes masculine/feminine and semiotics/language.

I shall not attempt to resolve these theoretical differences here, nor to sum up this brief discussion of semiotics in relation to what has gone before in this chapter. My intention is to build into my deconstructions of the Ruralsville discourses questions regarding representation. This will involve reading (and giving) signs beyond the literal level of texts. Specifically, semiotics allows my research to include gaps, visuals, tactiles and sounds. In questioning femininity and writing, this is important.

2. Psychoanalytic Theories

What follows introduces psychoanalysis generally before presenting more detailed discussions of feminist re-workings. Many of the theories discussed are at odds with each other. I explain in this section what I shall be taking from them in relation to my work.

Psychoanalytic studies of young girls' constructions of femininity are called for. As the conclusion of her review of Gilbert and Taylor (1991) Bulbeck says:

> *It seems to me that a further tool by which young girls in the classroom might "fashion their own femininity" may well involve discussion of not only social contexts, but also psychoanalytic ones, of how females become both prisoners and perpetrators of their own desires.* (Bulbeck 1991:19)

This relates to Kaplan's advice to feminists that:

> *It is extremely important to use psychoanalysis as a tool, since it will unlock the secrets of our socialization within (Capitalist) patriarchy.* (Kaplan, 1983:24)

Johnson (1993) sees psychoanalytic dimensions as produced via discourse. Her analyses of teenage girls' modernity in the 1950s are subtitled 'girlhood and growing up'. She is saying that desire is historically produced, including the desire for agency and self-determination.

> *If, however, we understand the capacities and desires for self-determination - represented by the notion of resistance and associated concepts as pre-social - to be, instead, qualities produced within particular socio-historical formations in modern individuals ... then these dichotomies can be broken down.* (Johnson, 1993:33)

I suggest that there is value in working with a pre-social or psychic dimension. This will involve considering resistances, repressions, fantasies and metaphors within their socio-historic productions at school. My research emphasis, in psychoanalyses, is not on the outside world but on the inner one.

Psychoanalysis describes not what a person is, but how that person came into being (Freud 1953-1975c). As such, it uncovers a narrative history of the human subject. Through its frameworks, questions of gender and sexuality can be understood, although the original understanding was for a person undergoing clinical analysis. Flax comments that:

> *Freud at his best tried to provide an account of psychological development as simultaneously a bodily, intrapsychic, interpersonal and social-historical process.*
> (Flax, 1990:17)

According to Weedon (1987:43), psychoanalytic theories after Freud can account for 'the construction of identity on the basis of repression'. But because of the patriarchal bias of its initiator, psychoanalysis is seen by many women today as having either a blame-the-mother or a blame-the-victim-herself tendency (Daly:1978). I focus instead on what positive use psychoanalytic theories may have for my particular research. My question is: what happens in between babyhood and adolescence about desires and stirrings of the unconscious?

An additional psychoanalytic theory, (Chodorow 1978) accounts for psychic identity construction on the basis of a social theory of gender acquisition. This theory, which is based on 'object-relations' attributable to Klein (Harding and Sutoris 1987), ignores the theories of unconscious repressions and produces a feminist theory of its own. Sayers (1986a) is critical of Chodorow's (1978) socio-psychological theories of mothering and femininity for its failure to deal with the nature of the unconscious. Following psychoanalytic directions is different from following sociological directions, which deal only with theories of the social constructions of femininity. Psychoanalysis as I see it is not a theory of construction but a theory of pre-construction. What I try to do is juxtapose the two, and see object-relations theory as somewhere between.

One of the main points about psychoanalysis is its ability to demystify the notion of the conscious, centred and capable agent (Barrett 1988:91). By presenting a fragmented and flexible subject, psychoanalysis enables not only an investigation of poststructuralist subjects but an investigation of the roots of culture. Underlying my research questioning is the matter of the possibility and the actuality of change. How are gender relations and positions regarding femininity constructed by the girls? To what extent can they cause changes in themselves? What do they do for themselves? Are they caught in the nets of their own desires?

In order to explain how I will address my research questions from psychoanalytic perspectives, I now say something of Freudian theory and of Lacanian theory. Freud emphasized the precarious nature of gender identity, but he theorized it as an initial

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bisexuality, with a biological formation. This meant that he attributed to women envy, deprivation and lack, and to men fear of the loss of the phallus (Freud quoted in Mitchell, 1975:87). Freud's search for 'the distinguishing moment between the sexes' ended when he arrived at his biologically-based answer. As a result, feminists today find his givens of femininity and masculinity unacceptable.

However, the Freudian notion of the 'individual' as a site of conflicting impulses and drives provides a theoretical place to consider what happens as girls progress through their schooling, as they produce stories of fantasy/reality and as they later consider themselves in retrospect. The notion of conflict within the subject might be accounted for in psychoanalytic theory in ways that it cannot be accounted for by sociological explanations (Sayers 1986). In psychoanalytic theory, conflicts within the subject, and girls' repression of actions construed as 'masculine', are caused in early childhood. Following Freud, psychoanalytic theory argues for the primacy of early experience and its effects on later femininity. I am not arguing for the importance of early schooling as a substitute for the infancy location that dominates psychoanalytic theory as a site. But it is possible that beginning to write is a prime location.

Following but modifying Freud, the work of Lacan (1977) has strongly influenced feminist theories of language, sexuality and subjectivity (Grosz 1990, Weedon 1987). As did Freud, Lacan focussed on the time before young children begin to talk, theorizing this as the time when they imagine and structure their gendered identity. Lacan's work is useful in that it focuses on beginning recognitions of the self and offers an interpretation of the psychoanalytic roots of culture, of masculinity and of femininity.

In the early pre-speech stage, according to Lacan (in Grosz 1990a), children have not yet seen themselves as masculine or feminine, there being as yet no language with which they can encode or generate such meanings. Lacan (1977) describes the process of becoming a conscious gendered subject as a mirror process. He means this literally, not metaphorically, and describes the process whereby the child's ego splits into the 'I' which is watching, and the 'I' which is watched. Later, a second split occurs when the child resolves the situation by organizing her/his psyche, and unconscious, by having an 'I' which speaks and an 'I' which listens. The significance of this theory is that when children first see an 'I', when they notice the effect of a mirror, they do so only via reference to an Other. For Lacan, this critical change occurs in babies around six months, when they first catch sight of themselves as mirrored. The mirror thus produces a self as an object, a desire for an Other which originates with the mother and later forms the

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impetus to use language. From this I/you dialectic ordered thought develops and 'the child' is constituted as a subject.

A vital point is that at the mirror stage all 'children' see themselves by seeing an object that is not-them. This is their mirror image. But language, says Lacan, is phallocentric. This means that girls and not boys are other to that language, and are therefore located in the semiotic. Taking up Lacan in relation to feminist questions means understanding that what is phallocentric is not a girl's relations to the 'males she knows', but her relationship to language and culture.

For a girl, says Lacan, the implications of the realization, that she is outside phallocentric language and culture, remain with her for the rest of her life as the symbolic order. From this point on the girl is a conscious gendered subject ordered by language and the 'social institutions which language guarantees' (Weedon 1987:52). My question is: how does being progressively able to write develop or deny this process?

In the beginning writing phase the 'I' could be quite apparent, though it may be that a tertiary split happens when the writing subject writes. Here, the 'I' could be seen as again splitting into the 'I' which writes and the 'I' which reads. I am suggesting that psychoanalytic readings of the girls' writings could lead to new theories of literacy derived from Lacan's theory of the mirror process. An alternative way of employing Lacanian theory is to theorize the writing subject as mirrored in the girl writers around her. What she sees in their writing lets her know what she herself is because she is not-them. This development could lead to a collective theory of subjectivity, where girls see themselves in each other but recognize the split between the 'me' and the 'not me'. In this way subjectivity could be constituted according to what the Other is not.

There are further problems for me in adopting some aspects of Lacanian theory, and these are to do with the positions I have taken up regarding poststructuralism. For Lacan, the symbolic order of language is made up of signifiers. This is not the same as the linguistic view of Saussure's (De Saussure 1959), as in Lacanian theory the signifiers are 'not linked to fixed signifiers or concepts' (Weedon 1987:52) as they are in linguistics; but they are still structured, and I follow Bakhtin's theory of language rather than a linguistic theory (see Chapter 1).

Lacan allows the meaning of a word to change according to psychoanalytic interpretations. In linguistic theory, words do not denote something other than themselves (a rose is a rose); but in psychoanalytic theory (and also in some readings of literature) words may represent something else. Thus Lacan modified Freud's account of the fantasy of wish fulfilment, for example, by introducing Saussure's linguistic concepts of metaphor and metonymy, and effectively adding a semiotic dimension to psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious (Grosz 1990:4). This meant that the linguistic notion of metaphor became the Lacanian psychoanalytic notion of condensation, and the linguistic notion of metonomy became the Lacanian psychoanalytic notion of displacement.

For a linguist (De Saussure 1959, Halliday 1975), signifiers are the linguistic components of language; but for a psychoanalyst (Lacan 1977), signifiers consist of more signifiers achieving temporary meaning for speaking subjects. The latter is the theory I take up with my readings of the writing of the schoolgirls. The problem is that in both linguistics and in psychoanalysis there are structures: of language ordering and of I/me ordering. Whilst my thesis rejects structuralist linguistic analyses, what can a poststructuralist do about the structuring in psychoanalytic theories? With this dissertation I hope to produce some answers, as have Johnson (1993) and Walkerdine (1984b).

My discussion so far has brought me to the following position. Because the girls I have studied were also at a point of entry in their linguistic development, that of entering into the literate mode of encoding meaning, I have hypothesized that this stage in their lives may also be crucial to their constructions of gendered selfhood. The question I am now asking is this: is the movement into literacy, and into being able to make meanings as a writer, in any way parallel to the stage during which a girl infant moves into spoken language modes? Starting school represents a major change for a young girl moving into a community institution. Four to five year olds confront a new range of discourses at the same time as they begin to read and write. The coincidence of the discourses of the school, and the beginnings of literacy, would appear to produce conflicting possibilities in femininity for them. Lacan's theories of the beginnings of subjectivity offer possible ways of theorizing the writing subject.

In taking my theorizing in this direction I am encouraged by my reading of Grosz (1990a), although she is ambivalent about psychoanalyses' usefulness for feminists (1990a:147-148). On the one hand Lacan allows us to theorize female subjects as social and historical effects, rather than as biological givens: and this allows me to theorize what happens psychically, as a social history of the present, and as the girls write. On the other hand, Lacan's work is patronizing and condescending to women (Grosz 1990a:184). I also heed Grosz's warning that:

> *It [*psychoanalysis*] is a risky and double-edged "tool", for as a conceptual system it is likely to explode in one's face as readily as it may combat theoretical misogynies of various kinds.* (Grosz, 1990a:147)

The point I find useful about Lacan's mirror phase is that the child for the first time recognizes herself as a unified 'I'. She does this only by an image which is an illusion of unity. In acquiring a sense of a unified 'I' she at the same time has an unconscious knowledge that she is not the unified 'I' that she sees. In this way she comes to have a yearning for illusory wholeness. What I shall look for is evidence that these psychoanalytic processes relate in some way to girls' writing.

Further, I am influenced by the work of Klein (1955, 1975), which I discuss now before specifically feminist considerations. My discussion of Klein preempts some of the methodology of Chapter 3. I return to Freud, Lacan and their followers or feminist transformers in the next section of this chapter.

As a Freudian, Klein made detailed interpretations of the play, spoken language (but not written language), drawings and actions of 'individual children' (1975). Working with 'children' was against the psychoanalytic practices of her day, which stressed adult recollections of 'childhood'. Further, Klein extended her psychoanalytic interpretations to investigations of characters in novels, thus introducing literary dimensions to her data sources (1955:305-349). I take from Klein the freedom to range between an analysis of written text and the words and actions of one particular 'child'. What I shall do, which Klein did not do, is consider 'children' in interaction with each other, and consider their written texts rather than their drawings.

Klein worked in a great deal of detail (1975) with one 'child' in isolation from other 'children'. As a structuralist, she says (1975:465-466) she worked with 'internalization processes and identifications'. This psychoanalytic work leads her to theories of 'the analyst as an internal and external object'. Following Klein, I try to be self-conscious, although my interest in exploring theoretical psychoanalytic possibilities is an understanding of the unconscious, rather than an understanding of the Freudian dimension of sexuality. Klein's method of writing a description of the research event, followed by its interpretation, is one I shall follow:

> *Richard, back in the playroom, spoke about her dress, which had lines of white dots on a blue ground; he said, referring to the lower part of the dress, where the lines went in different directions, that they could be put into a soap-flakes advertisement.*

> *Mrs K interpreted that he was now stressing the cleanliness of the genital and inside of her body, represented by the lower part of her dress, to cover up his fears of the dirt and dangers which he attributed to that part of the body, and also for having thought and spoken of it in such disparaging terms.* (Klein, 1975:405)

Here Klein shifts from describing herself as 'her' to 'Mrs K'. I make similar shifts regarding myself in this dissertation, though I name the Ruralsville teacher 'Mr B' and myself 'me' (Appendix B). Like Klein, I look for metaphoric/condensed meanings amongst my research notes, taking not the surface meanings but their possibilities as indications of the unconscious. Klein's (1955) methodology also provides a pattern for mine in that she re-tells the narrative of the novel *If I Were You* (1955:314-120), and follows this with six interpretations she makes (1955:121-145). In taking Klein's methodological lead, but theorizing girls' **writing** as play, I try to interpret what is symbolic and what is symbolized. Klein says:

> *It was by approaching the play of the child in a way similar to Freud's interpretation of dreams that I found I could get access to the child's unconscious.*
> (Klein,1955:19-20)

I do not claim 'access', but I emphasize, as does Klein, that my interpretations are 'incomplete'. Klein (1975) says her 'linguistic' work has three aspects: the social, which regulates the external world; the psychic, which regulates the internal world; and the self-regulatory, where language itself contains self-regulatory mechanisms. The management of these three worlds is done by creating and re-creating systems of meaning from moment to moment. As a psychoanalytic theorist rather than as a linguist, Klein defines linguistics differently and includes the psychic. Linked to Foucault's theory of regulatory practices, Klein helps me to see writing by schoolgirls as an example of the regulatory practices of a culture. In considering Klein's interpretations of play and the ways they follow Freud's interpretations of adults' dreams, I can perhaps interpret girls' writing using similar analytic techniques. In this way I bring the research focus back to language, but to its written form.

Linked to Klein's account of psychosexual development are her two central concepts of fantasy and positions. Klein theorizes fantasy as the workings of the internal mind, and positioning as a result of these workings. A characteristic of actions performed in and on the internal world is splitting: that is, rendering the self into parts. This is a Freudian concept also developed in the work of Lacan. Klein's notion of position, however, emphasizes oscillation between various positions in different relationships and situations.

This is a crucial point for my own theorizing of the non-unitary subject and the place of written language for the writer who is herself a shifting subject. Klein's theoretical understanding of linguistic actions performed on the external world projecting meanings from the internal world itself represents a dichotomy rejected by poststructuralist theory. In the next section I try to resolve problems such as this.

Feminist Psychoanalytic Theories

This section considers feminist psychoanalytic theories (Butler 1990, Chodorow 1974, Cixous 1976, De Lauretis 1990a,b, Flax 1990, Irigaray 1980, 1985, Kristeva 1986, 1989, 1989, Mitchell 1975, Urwin 1984 and Walkerdine 1982-1990). The next section discusses working definitions and theories of desire, fantasy and symbol/symbolic. Central discussions of Walkerdine's work are spread throughout the remainder of this chapter, though discussions are not completed until the end of Chapter 3.

A socio-cultural view of psychic life is a long way removed from the perspective taken by traditional psychoanalysis following on from the individualized clinical and therapeutic practices derived from Freud (1953-1975c), Klein (1975) or Jung (1956), where the focus is on what happens psychically with one person only. Barrett (1992:466) says that 'many psychoanalytic approaches have eschewed the social aspects of the unconscious altogether'. In this section I work through various psychoanalytic theories to discuss feminist and poststructuralist possibilities for understanding girls as a social and psychic group. Firstly I consider feminist interventions in psychoanalysis.

There are feminist potentials in Lacan's theory. Walkerdine (1988:191) says that according to Lacan, 'the real could never be captured except in fantasy, and that fantasies were created in language.' Here the Lacanian notion of metaphor (Walkerdine 1988:184) with its implications of co-existent and vertical relationships, is useful to feminist poststructuralists, as it represents the imaginary order and the place where desires can be met. However, Lacan combines a Freudian and a semiotic analysis to theorize the unconscious as structured like a language (Tong 1989:220). For poststructuralists, this presents problems, as does his apparent assumption that language is the symbolic order.

Urwin (1984:264-322) decentres language as the object of investigation to focus on subjectivity and psychoanalytic theory in the emergence of language for babies. She deconstructs Lacan's theories of universality, of fundamental lack, of structuring and of phallocentricism to retain his theorization of the subject as non-unitary and his inclusion of socially produced feelings and emotions in the language acquisition process. For Urwin, the role of fantasy is crucial, as is the production of desire and the significance of separation. Each of these impinges on the 'social processes which regulate us and the psychic functioning of individuals' (Urwin 1984:322). Urwin theorizes how children first operate in social practices. She says that by their social positioning in discourses they generate meanings which embody fantasies of power. It is the theoretical movement from Lacan's psychoanalysis to her idea of (pre-)discursive positioning which makes Urwin's work poststructuralist.

As a discourse of non-rationality, psychoanalysis theorizes the splitting of the ego and its reduction to feelings:

> *Aspects of psychoanalysis have been crucial in the regulation of sexuality, passion and the irrational.* (Walkerdine, 1990:30)

To demonstrate her theories, Walkerdine makes feminist poststructuralist use of concepts from Freudian psychoanalysis and Lacanian theory (1990:41). For example, Walkerdine describes working class mothers presenting their 'children' with the practicalities of money being scarce and time being limited, thus shattering the bourgeois possibility of all being possible to those who strive, but:

> *such shattering is difficult to live if dreams of fulfilment - of constant presence, constant happiness - are offered as reality.* (Walkerdine 1990:30)

It is this romantic dream of 'fulfilment', desired by the feminine psyche, which Walkerdine highlights in her own visual art (1990:plate 2, after page 106). Here Walkerdine has photographed a painting on an open door, entitled 'Projection/Introjection: Memories of Mother'. This portrayal represents the duality of mother-and-housework and mother-and-sexuality. As a presentation of a rational/non-rational split, this photograph perhaps shows not a sociologically constructed agency but a psychoanalytic repression. This non-verbal example from Walkerdine's work introduces a feminist poststructuralist pragmatics in operation. I describe her (verbal) deconstructions at some length in the last section of Chapter 3.

Walkerdine explores Freud's defence mechanism of splitting to deconstruct/photograph a woman's experience. Similarly, she deconstructs/photographs herself as a schoolgirl (1990: front cover). This is in line with Mitchell's advice that:

> *the subject is split: but an ideological world conceals this from the conscious subject who is supposed to feel whole ... Psychoanalysis should aim at a deconstruction of this concealment and at a reconstruction of the subject's construction in all its splits.*
> (Mitchell, 1982:26)

Walkerdine says that:

> *Central to psychoanalytic accounts is the production of complex and tortuous conscious and unconscious relations, centred upon the girl's relations with her family. The account psychoanalysis offers presents a subject both more resistant to change than a rationalist account might suggest and engaged in a struggle in relation to the achievement of femininity and heterosexuality.* (Walkerdine, 1990:99)

I follow this psychoanalytic direction in querying the construction of the feminine subject. Being resistant to change is not the same as being resistant to patriarchy. Being resistant to change, even though that change may be rationally seen as appropriate, is a problem for many women. Understanding something of what drives us to choose against our 'better' knowledge is an aim of feminist psychoanalytic theory. Walkerdine says:

> *If we want to understand the production of girls as subjects and the production of alternatives for girls, we must pay attention to desire and fantasy. It is no good resorting to a rationalist account which simply consists in changing images and attitudes.* (Walkerdine, 1990:104)

Working from interview data, observations and published texts for girls, Walkerdine examines psychoanalytically the play of discourses and the relations of signification. This results in her theoretical focus on desire, which she sees as producing in girls both a struggle to become subjects and a resistance of the subjectivity provided. In my investigation of the psychic and its place in the socio-cultural, I follow Walkerdine (1984b:210) in her assertion that 'psychic states are produced in relation to social practices.' This also follows, theoretically, from Lacan, in that the subject is decentred from consciousness; and it follows poststructuralist theory in that it deconstructs the notion of the unitary subject.

The following are some examples of Walkerdine's research operating in these ways. Her analyses of comics for girls functions as:

> *a vehicle for discussing the relation between the psychic production of feminine desire and cultural forms and practices.* (Walkerdine, 1990:87)

Here Walkerdine shows links between comics, conscious and unconscious desires and 'the knight in shining armour, "Mr Right".' Walkerdine discusses McRobbie's (1982) work, saying, 'And, as we know, the father simply precedes the prince.' (Walkerdine 1990:90) She then discusses two popular comics, *Bunty* and *Tracy*. In describing the girl protagonists in the comics as victims of cruelty and circumstance, Walkerdine locates what she calls a 'surface' level and a 'fantasy' level:

> *I say on the surface because it is precisely the organization of fantasy (rather than the realist approach of anti-sexist literature) which is so important in understanding the relation of such literature to the psychic organization of desire. After all, fantasy is the tool par excellence of psychoanalysis.* (Walkerdine, 1990:91)

Walkerdine says the comic-stories 'relate to fantasies about family, sexuality and class'. Because of this they operate not at the 'realist' level, but as powerful ways of constructing heroines 'whose fight against private injustice is private endurance'. They show girl heroines with whom girl readers can identify, and they touch directly at what is understood and at what can in fantasy be resolved. Walkerdine's research does not extend to showing us how she knows this, though we assume she knows it from her own experiences.

Earlier, Mitchell (1975) argued that it is the symbolism of the phallus that allows men to dominate, and that some women's actions show unconscious phallic qualities. The symbolic status of the phallus has not been specifically taken up by theorists of agency or of girls' resistance to patriarchal discourses (such as Davies 1990b, Gilbert 1989b, Moss 1989, Patterson 1990). There are two different issues here: how culture operates and how girls/women are psychically produced in patriarchal culture. I shall try to work my theories so that they deal with both. It is important to understand that neither Chodorow, Mitchell nor Lacan are predominantly concerned with the literal father but with 'the child's' relationship to 'its' culture via 'its' mother and father. This is what allows me to theorize culture and schoolgirls with psychoanalytic research tools. The culture I consider is the schoolgirl culture that they share.

The problems of patricentric discourse in the work of Lacan, and subsequently in Kristeva's (1986) feminist research following him, are avoided in the matricentric discourses of Chodorow (1970. 1989), who in her later work 'shifted to a microsocial context' (Barrett 1992:456). I am aware of Grosz's critique of Chodorow and Mitchell:

> [They] *leave the functioning of discursive and signifying systems - the domain of phallocentricism - unquestioned.* (Grosz, 1990:22)

It is at this point that I would like my research to operate. Chodorow's theory is one of psychoanalytic reproduction of a given culture, whereas mine is intended as multiple theories of productions of culture.

Chodorow (1978) theorizes unconscious processes for young girls, focussing particularly on the importance of mother-daughter relationships. This is a feminist re-working of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, which focuses on mother-son and father-son relationships. Chodorow's theory, with its emphasis on the 'psychic effects of the pre-Oedipal phase of development' (Weedon, 1987:58), challenges both biological and social theories of gendered subjectivity. The reproduction of mothering is seen by Chodorow as the basis of women's location in the domestic sphere, and leads eventually to girls' positioning as mothers themselves. Such positioning includes particular life-choices made in expectation of particular styles of mothering.

At the start of the research project I questioned following Chodorow (1978), before I decided to work towards girl-based (not mother-based or boy-comparative) theories. This followed Chodorow (1989), where a relational self is suggested as a characteristic of women in Western culture (after Gilligan 1977,1982). Here Chodorow introduces concepts of object-relations to theorize an inner self:

> *created through "internalized self-other representations". This self is not only constructed relationally, it is "intrinsically social": able to recognize others as selves too and attain the "intersubjectivity that creates society".* (Barrett, 1991:119)

This theory acknowledges the interaction of the psychic with the social.

My research suggests a psychoanalytically produced gendering from school, not from 'the family'. Though this does not deny the earlier and continued events of mothering it raises the possibility of decentring mothering as a theory and replacing it with qualities developed away from the family as a culture of girlhood. In these ways I have moved from theories of mothering and towards theories of a relational and agentic self constructed/repressed by culture. This follows Flax (1990:xv), who warns that feminism has been seduced by psychoanalysis into accepting family-based theories of power. I endeavour to challenge these theories by focussing not on the girls' households, but mostly on the school and its playground.

Central to psychoanalytic discourses which led to developments in literary theory, is the work of Irigaray (1980, 1985), Kristeva (1986, 1989) and Cixous (1976). I take up some of the methodologies/critiques of literary theory in my discussion of deconstruction (Chapter 3). Now I look briefly at theories allowing a focus on the problem of phallocentrism by considering the nature of discursive and signifying systems.

Irigaray brings psychoanalytic textual practices into today's culture, and in this regard she is a postmodernist (Tong 1989:226). Irigaray:

> *resists the temptation to psychoanalyse subjects, real or fictional individuals, in her writings, and instead uses psychoanalysis as a mode of interpretation of texts, a device for the interrogation of knowledges.* (Grosz, 1990:170)

I endeavour to follow Irigaray's pattern of not psychoanalysing people; instead I describe the textualized and discursive practices of the school. Irigaray sees women's language as distinct from men's, and as an attempt by women to satisfy their desire. I follow Irigaray and Lacan in that the acquisition of language relates to desire, and this leads to questioning relationships between writing, fantasy and subjectivity.

The Ruralsville girls produced writing with literary qualities of narrative, symbolism, gap and poetics. Irigaray sees sexuality and such literary language as integral to each other (Irigaray 1991), and asserts that women's language, like their sexuality, is non-linear and incoherent to rational men.

> *Women are committed to two gigantic tasks: assuming consciousness of the order of language and of one's tongue as sexualized, and also of creating a new symbolic morphology in which she can say: I sexual being, woman, assert such and such, take such and such action and so on. Meanwhile the only activity which endeavours to take women into language is the narrative discourse. She tells about herself.*
> (Irigaray, 1991:72)

As a way of seeing schoolgirls 'taken' into language, I investigate narratives (Chapter 4), and sometimes resort to narratives myself.

Irigaray believes that identity involves, for girls, a psychic shift away from their mothers. At the same time, girls/women are exiled from their sexual identities. Because girls' first relationships are same-sex relationships with their mothers,

> *culture exiles them from this relation of communication, never leaving them alone as between women, and without providing for ways of signifying the female gender when they are in a heterosexual situation.* (Irigaray, 1990:74)

I wanted to know what girls did about the fact that they were a girl-group and not a girl-group within their heterosexual situation at school.

Cixous' theory is also based on Lacan's and relates feminine literary writing to feminine libido and the unconscious. Cixous sees women's writing as surpassing the phallocentric system, but warns that it cannot be theorized or defined:

> *It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded - which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.* (Cixous, 1980:287)

The importance of Cixous' theory is that it emphasizes writing as the site of femininity's (re)construction:

> *writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures.* (Cixous, 1980:283)

In exploring whether girls write in ways that could be interpreted as links between body and text, I take up Cixous' psychoanalytic focus on the imaginary and read 'girls' as 'women'. Here Cixous literally spells out her Freudian grounding:

> *Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible.* (Cixous, 1980:280)

Kristeva (1986, 1989) argues that there is no essential womanhood. Unlike Cixous, Kristeva believes that the feminine aspects of language are open to men. This is because she does not see the feminine as aspects of the female libido. In this she agrees with Jung's (1956) theory of the ambivalence of femininity and masculinity, and says the feminine is a way of writing open to male and female writers. I have ruled this research option out by my decision to define femininity as a girl-only quality.

Kristeva theorizes the subject as constituted by psychic levels of meaning in language:

> *The production of meaning is instead an actual production that traverses the surface of the uttered discourse, and that engenders in the enunciation - a new stratum opened up in the analysis of language - a particular meaning with a particular subject.* (Kristeva 1989:275)

The 'analysis' Kristeva refers to here is psychoanalytic. I follow her emphasis within the study of language to consider the psychic shifts in feminine positionings over time.

Currently there are three 'trends' in feminist psychoanalysis:

> *fundamentalism based on drives and instincts, object relations seeing a self interacting with others, and psychoanalysis used as a tool for cultural interpretation.* (Barrett, 1992:459)

The 'trend' I follow relates to the interpretation of culture. At the same time I attempt to deal with the other two by seeing how the subject interacts with others and whether there is evidence of repressions. Amongst feminist theorists currently bringing psychoanalysis to meet postmodernism are Butler (1990), Flax (1990) and De Lauretis (1990a, 1990b). The following briefly discusses ways by which their work further informs mine.

Central to psychoanalytic theory, as compared to agentic sociological theory, is the notion that identity is not singular but split and in conflict. This allows psychoanalytic theory to explain girls'/women's multiple roles. In this regard:

> *the very injunction to be a given gender takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker, in sum, to signify a multiplicity of guarantees in response to a variety of different demands all at once.* (Butler, 1990:145)

Butler argues that it is repetition that constitutes identity and that the task for feminism is to:

> *locate strategies of subversive repetition ... and affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity.*(Bulter, 1990:145)

Through a multiplicity of subject positions, and by particular repetitions, it is possible that some kind of psychic patterning is built up for/by the girls at school.

In psychoanalytic ways I work not with reason but with speculation. Here I follow Flax (1990), a practising psycho-therapist who believes that psychoanalytic theories most powerfully address questions of subjectivity.

> [Psychoanalytic theories] *undermine our belief in and pride in a particular and definitive human excellence - reason.* (Flax, 1990:7)

Producing unreasonable research findings is, of course, only possible within postmodern/poststructuralist framings.

> *Feminists and psychoanalysts offer alternative models of learning and ways of making sense of experience. They speak of and to worlds outside texts, literature and language.* (Flax, 1990:11)

I see these worlds as the worlds of discourses, of signs and of subjects. They encompass not only pedagogy, but academia and everyday life. As De Lauretis (1990a) says, contemporary feminist theory moves in many ways at once. In looking for links between the cultural and the subjective, I am aware that my research attempts to be :

> *concurrently social and subjective, internal and external, indeed political and personal.*(De Lauretis, 1990a:116)

If psychoanalytic theory is useful for my research project the question is whether the more sociological discourse theories can be taken up at the same time, or whether they are competing theories. Further, I am critical of the interpretive excesses of psychoanalytic theories of the unconscious. Surely female subjectivity can go beyond what De Lauretis (1990:126) calls 'phallic definition'? It seems that this is possible if we follow De Lauretis' suggestion and research not our 'unachieved identification' but our 'resistance to identification'. Thus, combining resistance theories with psychoanalytic theories may produce useful new theory. Maybe psychoanalysis is best left at the methodological level, and this may mean reading the research data in psychoanalytically deconstructive ways and then leaving it. But this ignores the need for some kind of statement of what is found because of the process. And it ignores the need to resolve/dissolve the sociological/psychic split in feminist research.

I have mentioned points of conflict between theories focussing on the social construction of the subject (by discourse), and theories which focus on the repressions of particular desires (by allowing for multiple positionings of the subject and lack of rationality). There are distinctive qualities in psychoanalytic theories which I shall take up. These include whether or not girls are imprisoned by their own desires (Bulbeck, Weedon, Sayers) and how the psyche relates to culture (Flax, Urwin, De Lauretis). In the process I shall query the notion of the conscious, centred and rational agent (as do Walkerdine, Tong, Grosz). Because my work is intended to develop a feminist poststructuralism, I shall also question the binary splits within psychoanalytic theory (Lacan) and additionally ask whether the girls' writing exemplifies this or not. If not, then I shall need to devise a way of working psychoanalytically without such binaries (Grosz, De Lauretis).

The theory of the mirror, culture and language is useful if it allows for notions of resistance (Sayers) and agency as well as of repression. But I also want to know how being a writer effects subjectivity in other unconscious ways (Cixous, Irigaray), and whether these ways are linked to being part of a group of other writers (Klein, Chodorow 1989, Barrett, Todd and Fisher, Flax). Psychoanalysis allows me to define linguistics as including the psychic (Klein), and to see writing as inclusive of the body (Kristeva, Cixous). Additionally, it enables me to consider fantasy (Walkerdine, Klein) and semiotics/symbolism (Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixous). Specifically, this means I can look at the research data to see what representations there are of such non-rational phenomena. Further, I can consider relational subjectivity (Chodorow 1989) and the importance of a peer group (Urwin). Moreover, psychoanalysis leads me to writing as a location for my research; and to postmodernism as a location for my own psychoanalytic deconstructings (Grosz, Butler, Flax, De Lauretis). Further still, it leads me to into speculations (Irigaray, Flax).

Desire, Fantasy and Symbol/Symbolic

Central to psychoanalytic theory and its understandings of the subject are the concepts of desire, fantasy and symbol. I discuss each in turn and say how they link to what I have said earlier and how they link to my thesis.

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For Lacan (1977, 1982), as for Freud (1938), desire in infancy shifts from that for the mother to that for the father. This desire for the father is theorized as the symbolic form of the phallus. The claim to the phallus, as a symbol of power, can be read in the challenges made by girls within discourses of schooling. Alternatively it can be subverted to the desire for the arrival of the prince, and the living out of feminine fantasy through a man. Walkerdine (1990:97) sees the psychic organization of desire as having an 'I want' function. She says (1984:205) that the discursive processes which position us 'are also those which produce the desires for which we strive.'

The absence of desire is also important to poststructuralist theories of subjectivity, as are contradictions and solutions to sets of desires and problems. Walkerdine (1990), as an example, relentlessly confronts us with herself: as a young girl, as an older girl and as a young woman. She does this with words and photography. (Valerie Walkerdine as a five-year-old bluebell fairy looks exactly like something out of my mother's photograph album.) Through autobiographical presentations, then, we see ourselves, together with the desires we did not then have and those that we acted on later.

Crucial for women is the relation between psychic production of feminine desire and cultural forms and practices. Which desires are prominent is a measure of accessible cultures and discourses, rather than a measure of individuals/subjects. Walkerdine (1990:90) in this way, and as I have begun to describe, sees comics for girls operating at the level of desire. She says that they are codes through which girls' adult femininity is being constructed 'and therefore may be read'. What I shall try to do, as a way of psychoanalytically researching the construction of gendered subjectivity, is to read the Ruralsville writings as codes of desires. In addition, I consider the girl writers' physical positionings and actual writing events as sites for the productions of these desires.

Davies and Banks (1992) say they regard desire in non-psychoanalytic ways. They say of the girls and boys in their study:

> *The fulfilment of their wants or desires is seen as a confirmation of this self ... That their desires might be discursively constituted or might result from the influence of others is not thinkable within these children's interpretive frameworks ... In using the term desire here, we are not invoking a psychoanalytical model of desire (as some poststructuralist writers do), but seeing desire as implicated in storyline.*
>
> (Davies and Banks, 1992:4-5)

Here Davies and Banks confuse the issue, and their 'desires' might better have been called 'wants'. What I shall do will also implicate story(line), and I suspect my defining of desire will sometimes blur with Davies and Banks' use of the term. There is an unresolved problem here.

With the Ruralsville data, I intend applying my understanding of the Lacanian notion of desire in order to produce psychoanalytic readings. This means looking at the symbolic order (and at symbols) rather than considering the pragmatic wantings of the writers, which is what Davies and Banks seem to do. Desire in the theoretical psychoanalytic sense is thus not the same as its commonsense meaning. The speculations I shall make regarding girls' desires will therefore not be about explicit sexuality or about on-the-surface wants, but will involve the uses of signs. In particular, I shall look for signs between the girls, following Urwin's psychoanalytic theory of power relations in social settings.

Urwin (1984) shows that in poststructuralist theory, Freud's analysis of the narcissistic mirror-phase is integrated with theories of power, desire and the regulation of social and cultural practices. In Lacan's structuralist account the narcissism is still central. For feminist poststructuralists (Urwin 1984) the infant not only takes the role of the Other at the point of entry into spoken language. The infant is able to take the position of that Other and then switch both position and power, to move from dependent to dominant and vice versa. Urwin quotes from her research journal of 'home observations' to show how her theorizing links to her data.

> *Linette spreads a tissue on the floor, lies on it, pulls it up between her legs, gets up and wipes her bottom. At the same age she uses her toothbrush to clean the teeth of her teddy bear. Taking the part of the significant other, though in fantasy, marks a shift in the child's power in relation to the mother within these particular activities. In these examples Linette is also simultaneously looking after herself as a little baby, the position which must eventually be suppressed.* (Urwin, 1984:302-309)

I have quoted the shortest of Urwin's patterns of data presentation and emergent theorizing because I shall follow this approach in Chapter 4 when I consider what happened at the school. Urwin's way of writing-up research corresponds stylistically to Klein's, which I quoted earlier.

From Urwin, we see how a constant changing of places operates in practice. This is what feminist poststructuralism can contribute to psychoanalysis: the Other itself changes in accord with the desires of the subject, who may herself become the object of her desire.

As exemplification, Urwin describes two-year-old girls and boys, and their mothers, electing to move from one set of discursive practices to another because of their desire:

> *Jeremy is investigating the tool set. His mother suggests. 'What are you going to build? Are you going to fix something? Are you going to fix the trolley?' 'Yeah'. 'Why don't you take the screwdriver and go and fix the trolley?'... Jeremy reaches for the hammer, bangs, screws some more, vocalizes, and reaches for the bolt on the wheel of the trolley. He says, 'Dadda. Daddy' looking up at the mother and smiling... The mother comments 'Daddy has screwdrivers? Daddy can fix that?' Finally, the mother confirms the child's male gender, and reproduces recursively ... her own position of exclusion. The mother has sat back by now, and is looking around the room...'Look. There's a doll sleeping...Would you like to go and play with that?' ... The mother laughs. "I didn't think you would." Jeremy turns a screw in the tool set. 'Daddy. Daddy!'* (Urwin, 1984:308)

Young children make use of power relations very early (Urwin 1984:284-5). Being positioned as dominant or dependent, Urwin says, is an effect of which particular discourse is called into play. Thus power relations interpenetrate the production and reproduction of subjectivity throughout early childhood. Urwin and Walkerdine modify Lacan's theory of the centrality of the Oedipus complex as the central determinant of subjectivity. They do this by introducing the Foucauldian theory of power and linking it to Lacan's notion of desire.

> *Here a ... modification in Lacan's account is needed. ...taking up a subjective position also marks a relation of power with respect to the particular discourse in operation.* (Urwin, 1984:284)

To develop theory, Urwin produces evidence and cites examples (of nappy-changing scenarios, feeding, farewelling and bathing) to show that desire and power together are socially related. In these examples, parents and other care-givers relate to very young 'children' through what Urwin names 'social practices', rather than 'discourses'. She says two-year-olds who in 'pretend-play' 'set the table' are not simply 'mastering' significant events, but acting on desires:

> *In fantasy they are actually controlling the regularities of the event and producing its truth themselves.* (Urwin, 1984:283)

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By introducing notions of power, Urwin shows that the dimension of gender can be theoretically introduced as a site which operates productively and reproductively:

> *These examples imply that power relations interpenetrate the production and reproduction of subjectivity throughout children's development.* (Urwin, 1984:285)

My thesis is that power relations operate through the event of writing, and I suggest that they operate by psychoanalytic repressions of desires as well as by other mechanisms. In the analysis chapter (Chapter 4) I make my accounts of girls inscribing subjectivity.

To consider these operations or productions, I need to explain something of 'fantasy'. An initial definition is that fantasy is a free flight of the imagination, where a series of images or feelings takes over from the rational. Such fantasy may result in dreams, stories or highly unexpected life-choices. Commonsense understanding is that it contrasts to 'realism' by being fantastic, crazy, over-the-top, somehow less valuable than non-fantasy.

As a psychoanalytic concept, fantasy/phantasy's etymology comes from Freud, who made it the content of his analyses. In theorizing that emotions find their expression in fantasy, Freud showed their effects and operations, and since then fantasy has been a major tool of psychoanalysis. Walkerdine (1990:76) believes that it is not necessary to counterpose fantasy with reality, as each can be read as the other when positioned differently in discourse. She says they should be 'worked through in their inscriptions in the veridicality of discourses and practices.' I propose working through the girls' inscriptions of femininity by considering 'reality' and fantasy as shifting positions within discourses. This should allow me to read the fantastic as a reality for its writer, and to read what seems to be a 'true' story as a fantasy. Further, these readings may differ and defer over time, as my own subjective understandings of fantasy and 'reality' change.

In this way I superimpose my own realist/fantasy positioning as a reader on the texts that the girls have produced. This is also the position taken by Walkerdine in her critique of feminist realist approaches to anti-sexist literature. In assuming that girls' reading of sexist literature is a realist reading, the role of fantasy is ignored. It is the organization of fantasy:

> *which is so important in understanding the relation of such literature to the psychic organization of desire...Fiction is not a mere set of images, but an ensemble of textual devices for engaging the reader in the fantasy.* (Walkerdine, 1990:91-2)

I suggest that if narrative fiction is a fantasy engagement for readers, it must also be a fantasy for its writers. Walkerdine says:

> *The reader who engages in this fiction lives a "real" life which is at the same time organized in relation to fantasy.* (Walkerdine, 1990:148)

For Walkerdine, the notion of fantasy thus carries dimensions of the unconscious:

> *The unconscious can work in ways which we do not relate clearly to an actual event.*
> (Walkerdine, 1990:92)

In this way the superego provides a censuring device as a defence against a set of fears.

For Walkerdine (1988:198), fantasy is the insertion into an imaginary discursive practice, and the imaginary order is the place where desires can be met. From research grounded in social practice (1988:194), Walkerdine theorizes young girls and play as an acting out of fantasies. She says 'it is their position within a practice which produces the possibility of the fantasy and of pleasure'. By engaging in such fantasy these girls avoid the discourse of mathematics.

To look at realism and at fantasy as being both the imaginary and the symbolic, I reconsider my research journal. Urwin quotes from journals to show that a very young child re-enacts the actions performed by a mother caring for a child. She theorizes this as a subjective positioning whereby the child becomes in fantasy the one performing the significant action.

> *Taking the part of the significant other, though in fantasy, marks a shift in the child's power in relation to the mother within these particular activities.*
> (Urwin, 1984:307)

This taking of parts through fantasy, I suggest, is what allows girl-writers to shift the power constituents of the various discourses they encounter at school. Urwin shows that mothers sometimes encourage fantasy-play that gives power to their children (184:309). What my own insertion into the discourses of the school may have done was encourage such fantasy-writing. I should say that I have not tried to do this, and I have seen no indications that this is so; simply that I realize it could have happened.

A term that recurs throughout Walkerdine's work is 'metaphor'. The psychoanalytic dimension of metaphor comes via Lacan, who modified Freud's account of the fantasy of wish fulfilment. He did this by introducing Saussure's linguistic concepts of metaphor and metonomy and reversing Saussure's primacy of the signified over the signifier. Walkerdine says that:

> *For Lacan, metaphor is what provides a key to understanding the construction of subjectivity.* (Walkerdine, 1982:137)

According to Lacan:

> *The real could never be captured except in fantasy, and ... fantasies were created in language.* (Walkerdine, 1988:191)

In this way a psychoanalytic understanding of fantasy, via metaphor, allows considerations of both the ways people make psychic meanings in language and the psychic meanings themselves. Metaphor, with its implications of semantic relationships beyond itself, represents the imaginary order and the place where desires can be met.

As such, metaphor operates not on literal meanings but on semiotics (Nöth 1990:128). Originally a concept stemming from Aristotle, metaphor involves transference of meaning, similarities, analogy, substitution and comparison. Mack (1975) says metaphor functions also as communication. For me this means looking for metaphors that recur and for metaphors that appear to be understood and repeated by the girls as a group. In this way I investigate Butler's (1989) suggestion that resistance operates through repetition. I also follow Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who theorize metaphors as icons based on the 'facts' of experience and therefore culturally determined. In this way, I work towards a cultural theory of girlhood by considering the metaphors that function, through narrative writing, as cultural signs for the writers.

In these ways I try to follow Walkerdine, who says:

> *Metaphor might provide a way to the relation of language to reason and emotion.*
> (Walkerdine, 1982:137)

Walkerdine's (1982) use of metaphor broadens Lacan's notion of it. For example, she considers shop play as a metaphor for what is (for the girls playing) the entry into the new signifying practice of mathematics. As a means of entry into a different discourse metaphor operates in a play setting to make accessible another frame of reference. In this way the notion of number is played at until it becomes no longer remote. Walkerdine says the person who gives the girls this access is the teacher. I look for ways by which the Ruralsville girls make new discourses of femininity accessible for themselves. In the case of writing. I suggest, girls are positioned to be able to provide their own discursive access when they become agentic. By writing, a site is found for agency and resistance. My psychoanalytic questions concern the additional nature of psychic repression, and whether agency and resistance (and their lack) link to it.

I use the term 'metaphor' following Walkerdine, although the terms 'symbol' and 'sign' would also be appropriate within psychoanalytic or literary discourses. For psychoanalytic readings of data, I rely on Walkerdine's (1982:134) understanding of metaphor as that which calls up the relevant discourse for the participants. Metaphor, in this way, becomes a key to understanding. Questions regarding the girls' fictionalized narratives are: does the writing involve uses of metaphor? If so, what are these metaphors, how do they function psychoanalytically, and is there evidence of collaboration between the girls as to their sharing of meanings?

Lacan and subsequent feminist reworkers of his theories take up notions of metaphor and 'the symbolic order'. Lacan (1965:116) says 'Man [sic] speaks therefore, but it is because the symbol has made him man.' But the virtual disappearance of 'symbol' from the post-Freud/post-Jung lexicon contrasts with the frequent appearance of 'the symbolic'. Nöth says, for example:

> *In the writings of Lacan ... the symbolic is part of a triad comprising the real, the imaginary and the symbolic...The order of the symbolic is the order of language and visual signs.* (Nöth, 1990:116)

Jung said earlier that in psychoanalysis:

> *a symbol does not define or explain; it points beyond itself to a meaning that is darkly divined yet still beyond our grasp, and cannot be adequately expressed in the familiar words of our language.* (Jung, 1956:vii, 336)

For Jung, unconscious archetypes are given conscious forms. This use of 'symbol' is similar to Freud's in that it links itself by connotation to the unconscious. Freud saw that the wider field of symbolism:

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> *is not peculiar to dreams, but is characteristic of unconscious ideation, in particular among the people, and it is to be found in folklore, and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes.* (Freud, 1953-1975a:351)

As an indirect method of representation, Freudian symbols are never constant (Nöth 1990:118); and here there are parallels in poststructuralist theories. As a psychoanalytic therapist Freud interpreted the meanings of symbols only in relation to the personal history of the 'individual'. This is an ethics I adopt in my reading of subjective writing where I consider each writer as a person I got to know a little.

Walkerdine discusses 'symbols' in relation to mathematical concepts (1988:159), but in other feminist reworkings of psychoanalysis, apart from Kristeva's, the notion of 'symbol' is not a feature. This is not to say that 'the symbolic' is not a feature, as of course the symbolic order of language is central (Grosz 1990:104). Irigaray, for example (Grosz 1990:170-180), follows Lacan and develops her critical tools of the symbolic and the imaginary to question 'sexual' difference as 'dictated' by patriarchy.

I hope, through this confusing set of terms, to have made clear that 'the symbolic' (order of language) is different from a symbol/sign/metaphor. De Lauretis, however, uses the term 'symbolization', presumably as a distinction from 'the symbolic'. She suggests a difference of 'symbolization' for women, as compared to men, as:

> *a different production of reference and meaning out of a particular embodied knowledge.* (De Lauretis, 1989:27).

This links to the work of Irigaray (1985) and fits with my intention to theorize bodies and productions of metaphoric meaning. By this De Lauretis enables me to theorize the referents of girls' writing as symbols of femininity. But what if she meant not that 'symbolization' was about symbols, but about 'the symbolic' (order of language)? Following this direction, perhaps De Lauretis rejects the binary of the symbolic and the semiotic, and instead imposes her poststructuralist idea of 'symbolization' (of language and semiotics combined), with many possibilities. This appears not to be so, as she says the 'symbolic' allows for women's:

> *self-definition as a female being or female-gendered speaking subject.*
> (De Lauretis, 1989:15)

Further, she says that this symbolic is:

> *not limited to literary figures but reaches into relationships between women in everyday life.* (De Lauretis, 1989:15)

I am thus questioning terminology usage as well as the psychoanalytic concepts being discussed, as I hope this deconstruction has shown.

Lastly, my work is informed by De Lauretis' report of research into relationships between two women (1988:22-25), where 'the function of female symbolic mediation that one woman performs for the other' is theorized. Whenever De Lauretis (1989:22-25) writes of what happens 'symbolically', or of 'a symbolic' (meaning, world, mediation, exchange, function, community, mother, debt), she refers to the symbolic order of language. I describe her theoretical discussion of Italian feminist research into 'what culture does not know about women's difference' (1989:24).

De Lauretis translates from the Italian *Non credere*: More Women Than Men (1989:21). She does so to describe feminist research into literary works by women, and which aimed to 'account for sexual difference by other concepts than victimization and emancipation' (1989:24). Methodologically, the researchers:

> *treated the texts as they would have their own words, as parts of a puzzle to be solved by disarranging and rearranging them according to extratextual, personal associations and interpretations, and thus erasing the boundaries between literature and life. This practice of reading* [was based on a] *wild form of psychoanalysis.*
>
> (De Lauretis, 1989:24)

Here De Lauretis presents a description for my research practice of deconstructing from texts written by schoolgirls (Appendix A) and by myself as the researcher (Appendix B). I describe my proposed deconstructions in Chapter 3, but De Lauretis preempts some methodological problems I have in justifying my own 'wild' psychoanalytic readings and in dealing with written texts and life texts.

Resulting from De Lauretis' methodology is a theory she names 'the symbolic mother' (1989:24), which signifies a recognition and an affirmation of 'women as subjects in a female-gendered frame of reference'. This theory, arrived at by a study of diadic 'relationships of entrustment' (1989: 23), involved a study of literary figures via their writing and writing about them. The 'figures' included Woolf and Sackville-West, Dickinson and Barrett Browning, Naomi and Ruth, Demeter and Persephone. In parallel ways I study the Ruralsville girls, via their writing and the writing about them, as girl subjects within a female-gendered set of references.

The Italian research considered ways one woman entrusted herself to the other 'symbolically' (1989:22), as a 'guide, mentor or point of reference.' This, De Lauretis says, is a 'female symbolic mediation'. Because schoolgirls often set up paired friendships I expected to find examples of this at the school. De Lauretis says:

> *Each woman of each pair validates and valorizes the other within a frame of reference no longer patriarchal or male-designed, but made up of perceptions, knowledges, attitudes, values and modes of relating historically expressed by women for women ...a female genealogy of a female symbolic. The recognition of mutual value is thus made possible by their inscription in a symbolic community.*
>
> (De Lauretis, 1989:23)

My thesis explores the theory of the schoolgirl group inscribing itself as a symbolic community by writing. This notion of a symbolic involves, I think, a fusion of the original (and patriarchal) notion of the symbolic (order of language) and the notion of symbol/sign/metaphor. But De Lauretis' use of the term seems to include something extra. In developing my thesis I attempt to work at the level of that something extra, which I suggest is the insertion of a feminist poststructuralism into psychoanalytic discourse.

Women's symbolization, De Lauretis (1989:27) argues, is 'emergent in the present time but reaching back'. This historical or chronological quality of biography will be, I hope, reflected in my delvings back into the events and practices of the five year time-span of my research. Implicitly, I see links to other girls at other times. De Lauretis describes her theory of the 'symbolic mother' thus:

> *As a guiding concept of feminist practice, in the relationship of entrustment, the notion of the symbolic mother permits the exchange between women across generations and the sharing of knowledge and desires across differences.*
>
> (De Lauretis, 1989:25)

Of course, I cannot take my research this far. What I shall do is look at the data and constrain myself.

3. Ending

A feminist psychoanalysis has some disadvantages, but accepting a structure whereby the development of the unconscious is seen as universally applicable, and uniform in its structures, is contrary to poststructuralist principles. Additionally, it assumes subjectivity to be linked always to sexual identity; and it privileges the early years of childhood in their importance to the rest of a girl's or a woman's life. The first of these criticisms requires a re-writing of the implicit binary in the notion of conscious/unconscious. The second requires a deconstructing of the centrality of sexuality; and the third requires a shift in focus to the sites and events of the present as a mechanism for the construction of femininities.

I attempt a beginning at each of these points. By considering the girls' writing as a blurring of the conscious and the unconscious I suggest that, at least for the writers, there is often no dividing line between the fantasy and the real. By focussing on middle childhood rather than on a time of blatant sexuality, I try to shift the notion of sexuality a little, so that its effects are subtle rather than central. By showing that subjectivity itself changes, multiplies and conflicts, I suggest that babyhood may be counteracted later by agencies and resistancies. From a starting point of seeing girls' written language as a location for the struggle to be the subject, my thesis progresses to examine what evidence there is that this is so. It does this by questioning the relation of the unconscious to writing, and considering possibilities in psychoanalytic descriptions of fantasy narratives. Through this process conflicting subjectivities are considered and viewed together.

A feminist post-structuralist criticism of Lacanian psychoanalysis is that it defines femininity according to set phallocentric structures. Such structures are historically produced through a range of discursive practices. Feminist post-structuralist theories see the symbolic order, rather than psycho-sexuality, as the location of subjectivity conflicts. Reading girls' writings in the psychoanalytic ways I have described involves considering the unconscious, the gendering of subjectivity and the effects of phallocentric discourse. A specifically Lacanian approach would assume that girls have no position from which to speak in the symbolic order. Adopting Lacan's theory without feminist modifications would mean believing that the feminine is constantly repressed by patriarchal/phallocentric versions of femininity. If the feminine subject is autonomous or self-defining in the girl-culture I have studied, then what is there in feminist psychoanalytic theory that could explain it? If it is not, then what does this show?

If girl-culture is fragmented, shifting and contradictory, as poststructuralist theories would have us believe, what modifications to psychoanalytic theory must be made?
My readings of the research data eventually become tools working to develop cultural interpretations of girlhood, whereby girl-subjects interact with others so that femininities are produced. Psychoanalysis, through its inquiry into the unconscious mind, is considered as a means of deciphering the acquisition of ideas and positionings in society. In this way Lacan provides a way for investigating the girl-culture. By considering links between the unconscious and the construction of identity, life histories and narratives provide a different dimension for understanding the becoming of the feminine.

One of the problems with psychoanalysis for feminist theory is its preoccupation with the Oedipus triangle and the centrality of the family as the origin of the psyche. My psychoanalytic descriptions are an attempt to decentre the role of the family and to look at what happens, unconsciously, elsewhere. To do this I investigate culture in terms of discourses and language. Linking psychoanalysis to the social represents a bringing of the micro world of the psyche into the macro world of culture. In poststructuralist theory these worlds can collide.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGIES: LIFE-TEXTS, WRITINGS AND DECONSTRUCTIONS

This chapter explains the ways the research was conducted and analysed. Methodology underlying the thesis is twofold. The practical work of collecting the data, and producing it as descriptions and representations of the researched practices, was a form of ethnography. The analytical work of considering the data in order to develop theory is mostly deconstructive. These two methods of researching are considered separately in the two sections of this chapter. At the practical level, there were no pre-set methodological rules to follow for the conduct of the research. At the theoretical level this meant being free to make choices as to how to make sense of the information given by the data. The research was a self-conscious engagement that attempted to develop a rigour of investigation by drawing on a variety of techniques and procedures by which the researcher's originally embryonic interpretations were checked, extended or changed. There are two sections in this chapter: ethnography and deconstruction.

1. Ethnography

Here I discuss feminisms and research methodologies as they apply. This is followed by discussions of micro-ethnography, empirical research and data gathering, exemplary practices, ethnography and the Ruralsville fieldwork.

Feminisms and Research Methodologies

Feminist researchers:

> *observe behaviours of women and men that traditional social scientists have not thought significant ...how they carry out these methods of evidence gathering is often strikingly different.* (Harding, 1987:2)

Listening carefully to how informants think about their lives is one of these methods. Understanding women's participation in social life and understanding men's activities as gendered are central theoretical questions informing methodology. In this regard:

> *One distinct feature of feminist research is that it generates its problematics from the perspectives of women's experiences.* (Harding, 1987:7)

I am writing girls' experiences into a feminist research agenda.

Fonow and Cook (1991) argue that feminist scholarship should be lived research. They discuss 'feminist attempts to transform the research process' (1991:1-2), and say that four themes currently run though feminist research methodology. These themes are 'reflexivity; an action orientation; attention to the affective components of the research; and use of the situation at hand.' My research could not be called action research (after Carr and Kemmis 1986), though it links methodologically to the other three components.

Reflexively it aspires to raise the consciousness of its writer and its readers. Additionally, the exposure of my developing thesis to a range of women and girl audiences has brought about some measure of collaboration in its construction and in its meanings (Rhedding-Jones 1990-1993). Locating myself as a gendered being in research was to establish my womanly positioning in the web of social interactions and as a subject in history.

As Neilsen (1990:29) says, 'feminist work does not ignore men in the same way as androcentric work ignores women'. As an example of men's research, a pioneering ethnographic work within education (Wolcott 1978) assumes 'the man in the principal's office' to be the principal rather than the man who happens to be visiting her. As research that sets out to study girls and to explore feminist theories, I would argue that the peripheral positions taken by the boys at Ruralsville in relation to my research is appropriate. However, now that it is five years since I began the research, I would reconsider my almost exclusive focus on girls and attempt to research the whole school in similar detail.

Whilst arguing for research on questions of significance to women and the inclusion of feminist perspectives in methodology, Jayaratne and Stewart say:

> *There is no single, prescribed method or set of research methods consistent with feminist values, although there are methods antithetical to those values.*
> (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991:101)

Feminist researchers must make independent decisions about the appropriateness of their work to the research questions they are asking and the purposes of it. As guidelines, Jayaratne and Stewart list criteria which include how the research has the potential to help women's lives, how particular audiences can be persuaded by it, whether the researcher has taken the time and the effort necessary to learn the new research skills necessary for quality research, whether different interpretations have been given, and whether the researcher has actively participated in the dissemination of research results.

Feminist research methods in the social sciences are ways of knowing. Nielsen (1990:4), like Harding (1986) queries the nature of science as regards feminism, saying that 'scientific method is inherently less distinguishable from other ways of knowing than was previously thought'. Following critical theorists (Habermas 1970), Nielsen argues to reject notions of objective knowledge; following standpoint epistemologists (Harding 1986), Nielsen (1990:14) argues that 'less powerful members of society have the potential for a more complete view of social reality than others, precisely because of their disadvantaged position'. The research methodologies that spring from these theoretical positions emphasize the questioning of 'scientifically based' knowledge as absolute. In short, feminist methodologies have contributed to the paradigmatic shift away from traditionally empiricist epistemologies. In this way feminist research is 'part of an academic labour process' (Stanley 1990:12), and 'written accounts of feminist research should locate the feminist researcher firmly within the activities of her research'. For this reason I write myself into this dissertation, although I know that this practice is usually construed as outside the bounds of appropriate academic genres.

In taking a feminist position, I am not arguing for female separatism but rather for female inclusion, agencies and discourses. Feminists adopting poststructuralist theories take up different sets of assumptions to feminists who accept the logic of feminist standpoint.

> *The feminist standpoint epistemologies argue that because men are in the master's position viv-a-vis women, women's social experience - conceptualized through the lenses of feminist theory - can provide the grounds for a less distorted understanding of the world around us.* (Harding, 1986:191)

A commitment to feminism implies that a feminist perspective is better than a non-feminist or an anti-feminist one, but to adopt standpoint theory is to reimpose an ordering of gender differences based on a theory of oppositional consciousness. Feminist research can counterbalance the traditional male bias in Western social science, but this does not imply that women will have a less distorted view than men. The Ruralsville research is overtly womanly because of the person who conducted it. Harding says there is no one woman whose experiences can be problematized as universal; instead there are plural women with all of the implications of diversity.

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With the Ruralsville research I have attempted to follow advice that:

> [in] *the best feminist analysis ... the inquirer her/himself* [is] *placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter.* (Harding, 1987:9)

This fits with my understanding of ethnography, where the researcher must be 'within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint' (Harding 1987:9).

Initially I looked for other longitudinal research within education that followed gendered developments of boys or girls. At this stage I had not devised deconstructive ways of working with data nor seen my work as being discursively constructed. Thus I saw similarities between what I intended and what Wolpe (1988:24) produced as a structuralist researching teenaged girls' and boys' gender identities in the classroom. Wolpe's research builds on the influences of Marxist sociologists of the seventies, and concludes that 'with classroom behaviour, girls are active agents and not passive victims' (1988:248). Because Wolpe's findings seemed to be what I then wanted to find, I thought her theories and her methodologies were appropriate for my project also. This chapter explains why I made shifts to link the theories I explore to the ways I conducted research.

Micro-ethnography

I researched literacy events and practices without much regard for the 'great divide' (Street 1993) between spoken and written language, and instead recorded their mix. To do this, I worked with a qualitative research practice that borders on ethnography. This research practice allowed for some postmodern realizations of people living with multiplicities of meanings. Unlike those anthropologists who worked full time in the field for the period of their study (Bell 1983, Geertz 1973, Mead 1961), the time I spent at the school was only a small fraction of the time the girls spent there. In some ways, though, researching at Ruralsville was researching a culture that was mine.

There are methodological problems in applying ethnography to face-to-face settings in schools. Green and Wallat call such work 'micro-ethnography' and advise that:

> *Given that the micro-ethnographer does not study the whole culture, what this researcher must do is carefully lay out the parameters of what is to be studied: that is, define the unit of analysis which is being considered as the whole.*
>
> (Green and Wallat, 1981:xii)

Rather than being with the subjects of the research on a twenty-four hour basis, as the traditional anthropologist often is, ethnographic work in education operates occasionally. Street (1991, 1992) says micro-ethnography functions when the researcher has prior knowledge of the sites and events being researched and when the study is longitudinal. But for traditional anthropologists neither of these factors need characterize their research. Street (1992) sees the generation of subjectivity, self and identity as a crucial aspect of literacy, and calls for close, detailed analyses of literacy practices in relation to them.

Bourdieu advises sociologists working as ethnographers to make the familiar unfamiliar, which is the opposite from the action taken by traditional anthropologists.

> *The sociologist who chooses to study his* [sic] *own world in its nearest and most familiar aspects should not, as the ethnologist would, domesticate the exotic, but, if I may venture the expression, exoticize the domestic, through a break with his initial relation of intimacy with modes of life and thought which remain opaque to him because they are too familiar.* (Bourdieu, 1988:xi)

The exposure of the everyday practices of classroom life to the eye of a reader can be seen as a political action, following Bourdieu's sociology of the 'transformation of culture and society through subversive revelation' (Branson and Miller 1991:38). The sharing of the things we assume to be private and unique to ourselves and our own experience is a characteristic of not only twentieth century feminism, but also of radical sociology, as both seek to explain the position of the individual/subject in terms of public and shared positionings. I suggest that the writing of an ethnographic record can be one way of making this happen.

My research journal (Appendix B) and its follow-up interviews (Appendix C) are framed by my particular agendas for research. The written artefacts produced by the girls and the boys (Appendix A) serve as exemplary texts for my theorizings. Within the theoretical framework I seek to establish, all descriptions are to some extent controlled by writing and therefore somewhat open for readers' interpretations. I am not aiming for 'naturalistic' narratives where my constructions as a writer are hidden, but for presentations which explicitly include and select from the field of their recorded descriptions.

Empirical Research and Data Gathering

Generating knowledge from experience can be seen as an empirical research activity in that the theories produced are derived not from other theories, but from what happens and what is seen to happen in the process of data collection (Lather 1991b). 'Empirical' thus applies to a range of non-positivist qualitative research. Cherryholmes (1988:107-124) defines as empirical all of the following: phenomenology and interpretative research, critical theory and research after Habermas, interpretive analytics after Foucault, and deconstruction after Derrida. I use the term to reinscribe its meaning as appropriate to poststructuralist theory. However, I do not see deconstruction of published written texts as an empirical action. Consequently I go against the use of the term by literary critics who necessarily research not the life-texts of everyday action but their published and more removed representations interspersed with fantasy. I would argue that the representation of an ethnography is qualitatively different from the representation of a novel. For me, empirical research is time and place-referenced fieldwork dealing with the primary resources of living texts, discourses and people.

Feminists such as Lather (1991a, 1991b) and Cook and Fonow (1990) are also working to reclaim the word 'empirical' and employ it in its original sense of linking pragmatics to theories. Lather argues (1991:xvii) that in current feminist empirical enquiry the focus is not on the dominant power but on 'oppositional discourses of criticism and resistance.' The Ruralsville enquiry into girls' writing is constructed within this mode.

Following ethnographers (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Green and Wallat 1981), I use the term 'data' for the material collected during the three years of the empirical phase. Although 'data' carries connotations of positivism, experimentation and pre-set action, all of this is the very opposite of what happened at Ruralsville. I use the term because it is so short, because it has a history of meaning within researchers' and non-researchers' understandings, and because I want to change its potential. Similarly, I employ the term 'fieldwork' to denote the data gathering phase that took place at the Ruralsville school and with the Ruralsville households. Again, although this is an ethnographer's term (Van Maanen 1988), it is also a logical positivist's.

My methodologies attempt to research what usually happens in practice, rather than set up situations or select sample texts. I wanted to come as close as possible to what was usually happening and what was usually being constructed through everyday classroom events. Because of this, the only person who collected the data was me. I attended the school whenever I could at the times when the teacher told me the children would be 'doing story writing'. The data of Appendix A represent the writing given to me by the girls and boys. Selection has been made by them, by life circumstances and by research intuition. I follow the poststructuralist notion that 'including everything' and 'presenting the truth' are impossibilities.

Sometimes I refer to the empirical part of the research as 'the case', as this is convenient and not entirely incorrect. Here my 'study' was the analyses, or descriptions, of the data which comprise the case. Case-study is a familiar qualitative research methodology within education (Stenhouse 1982); what I have done is close to case-study but in some ways extends it. In education,. Australian case-study became a particular form of school-based research (Kemmis 1980, 1982), often combined with action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986). These research practices are prompted by sets of beliefs about curriculum, schools and learning and are politically and ideologically motivated to cause collaborative change to schooling and to teachers. They have an action component which the Ruralsville research does not.

McRobbie (1978:96) employs methodologies that education case study researchers were later, and independently of feminism, to emulate (Kemmis 1982). Her research strategies for studying adolescent girls and the social constraints to their femininity include 'participant observation, taped and untaped interviews, questionnaires, informal diary-keeping.' Similarly Spender (1982:19) researched through case studies to theorize language in schools, and outside of them, by sampling from practice. Although case studies have long been established as research practice within clinical psychology (Freud 1938), education has borrowed from sociology in that its case studies usually focus on the social.

Exemplary Practices

As examples of feminist empirical research theorizing gender from classroom and home-based practice, I briefly describe some of the work of Davies and Banks (1992), Walkerdine (1990) Gilbert (1989c) and Steedman (1982) regarding methodologies.

Davies and Banks' (1992) research follows more than a decade of work by Davies (1980-1993) to theorize gender. Here they investigate and theorize gender orders amongst young boys and girls who considered feminist narratives. Before deconstructing understood gender discourses, Davies and Banks' conducted extensive interviews. After this the resultant transcripts were grouped according to ways of theorizing gender orders and

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places within them. Four groups emerged regarding theoretical positionings to do with differences between boys and girls, and one from each group is quoted and described.

The Ruralsville research follows similar methodological patternings, in both the ordering of empirical and deconstructive strategies, and in the selection of particular instances for analysis. However, the Ruralsville interviews comprise only a small part of the empirical work, and what I shall do is interweave data from interviews, artefacts and field notes so that a multiple analysis draws on a multiple set of data. Applying Davies and Banks' analytic strategies to my data gives a means of transcript selection and transcript discussion and, later, of theoretically locating subjectivity.

For Walkerdine (1982, 1987, 1989), a central issue is how subjects live the practices in which they are engaged and how they form the objects of their regulation. This follows from the work of Foucault (1978, 1982, 1988) which stops short of this empirical articulation. The bulk of Walkerdine's work has been based in classroom observations and interviews. Her deconstructions of child-centred pedagogy (1984b), of popular reading material (1984a), of the nature of mathematical reasoning (1988, 1989) and of mothering (Walkerdine and Lucey 1989) have come from her own physical placement in settings where events happened. All of the events and practices she theorizes can be seen as cases where subjectivity is constructed.

Additionally, Walkerdine writes herself into her work:

> *I am seated in the living room of a council house in the centre of a large English city. I am there to make an audio-recording as part of a study of six-year-old girls and their education. While I am there the family watches a film, "Rocky 2" on the video. I sit, in my armchair, watching them watching television. How am I to make sense of this situation?* (Walkerdine, 1990:173)

Gilbert's research (1989c) considers the writing of older girls at secondary school. Data she presents is uni-modal, in that it is written text only and does not include the classroom conversations which went to make up the writing. The girls' writing is presented not as part of on-going talk and action, and not as part of a longitudinal gathering of it. As the Ruralsville project was to research writers, rather than writing, an initial empirical methodology such as Gilbert's would have been inappropriate to its case, which includes fragmented pictures of the writers' lives and the discursive elements which constructed them. However, my research benefits from Gilbert's work as regards feminist theories and deconstructive reading strategies, as I shall show in the second half of this chapter.

Methodologically, Gilbert's (1987, 1989c, 1991, Gilbert and Taylor 1991) research is similar to that of Davies and of Walkerdine in that it quotes and deconstructs selected practices whilst challenging and reformulating dominant practices. In particular, Gilbert (1989c) deconstructs published school texts and the writings of final year secondary English students to consider the reading practices of teachers and the roles of readers and writers. To do so, she makes use of the poststructuralist theories of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. She does this as a means of linking these theories to feminist concerns, but without aligning herself to other feminist poststructuralist work (such as Walkerdine 1986, Weedon 1987).

Earlier, Steedman (1982:111) called for more appropriate methodologies for the researching of childhood and 'a sharper outline of the processes by which working class children take part in their own socialization.' Her research into the writing of primary school girls involved keeping her own teacher-records in the classroom for a week. Steedman links her classroom data to the 1830's artifactual writing of twelve-year-old girls. Her conclusion is that in both cases there is evidence of girls ordering and realizing their social selves. Methodologically, and because of her own insertion into the research project, Steedman makes possible the inclusion of discursive aspects as well as textual aspects of twentieth century girls' subjectivities. For the nineteenth century girls, historical analysis can be based only on written texts.

The research I have exemplified and discussed here is open to a range of charges from critical audiences. These charges include those of atypicality, of selectivity and of reading in only what the researcher wishes to find. In following such research, mine also inherits these problems, though I have tried to work around them in a number of ways. My selection of the school was based only on access pragmatics. I knew nothing about the school's writing program or feminist curriculum when I began working there, though I knew from a decade's experience of having visited rural schools that Ruralsville was quite typical of what happens in Victoria.

As a reader, I can only guess at what data selections are involved before researchers decide to analyse particular extracts or events. The criticism of reading in to the data only what is needed to be found can be countered by the argument that in poststructuralist theory many findings operate against singularity. This means that a feminist poststructuralist writer operates not from a linear shaping of the matter to be researched, the evidence and the conclusive finding; rather, she presents herself as selecting from a range of shifting positionings, preferring the opening of possibilities to the proving of particulars (Middleton 1993, Torgovnick 1990, Walkerdine 1990). The achievements of Davies, Gilbert, Steedman and Walkerdine are that they have created a space, showing it is possible to work in ways that are theoretical, empirical, feminist and personal at the same time.

Ethnography

As a strategy for examining specific events and practices, ethnography offers research possibilities for seeing what happens in real-life situations and for theorizing from that seeing. The role of the researcher is crucial to the outcomes of research, and when researchers have prior knowledge of events and practices, as did Davies and Banks, Walkerdine, Gilbert and Steedman, then case-study may become qualitatively ethnographic. I intend not to dwell on definitive differences between case-study and ethnography, but rather to explain my path as a methodologist.

The Ruralsville research includes field notes as a written representation, but side-stepped one of the conventions of ethnography (Van Maanen 1988:4) in that most of its representation was produced in the field. In this way, I suggest that my particular feminism and my understanding of literacy pedagogy led me to write the original Chronology whilst the girls watched and checked what I wrote, rather than writing privately later, as 'office-work or desk-work' (Van Mannen 1988:4). When I needed to write after the events took place, I scribbled in my car. Writing at the school allowed me to record details that otherwise may have been missed. It was also an attempt to let the girls, the boys and their teacher know what I was doing. At times I was an uncomfortable spy, and I am still unsure of the ethics of it.

Some ethnographers (Geertz 1983, Clifford and Marcus 1986) say that ethnography reflects a way of seeing the world, and that ethnography in itself is a theoretical positioning which determines what to research, how to research and how to write it up. Whilst agreeing with this, I also agree with critics of ethnography (Torgovnick 1990), who imply that it may be simply a methodology without a theory. I believe that presentations of data are not enough for research to go beyond simple description to knowledge, although there are other ways of coming to know than by research. This is where the boundaries between the production of a novel and the production of research into subjectivity and language are thin. In the next section of this chapter I describe how complex and particular descriptions and data presentations can lead to research knowledge by particular interrogations. As I see it, ethnography can be theorized by either structuralism or poststructuralism or both, and this theorizing is implicit in its analyses.

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I shall very briefly discuss the ethnographies of two anthropologists to show how they positioned themselves methodologically regarding their research. I follow this with some fragmented and sometimes contradictory information regarding related research practices. By doing so, I hope to clarify some of the points I have made and to show how my research operates as an original micro-ethnography somewhere between ethnography and case-study.

In Heath's (1983) anthropological work with the spoken and written language of young 'children' over a ten year period, data was gathered ethnographically and analysed according to her ordering of issues to do with the learning of literacy. Her analyses could not be described as deconstructions because she gives only one possibility for the meanings of the sayings and writings she analyses. In drawing her conclusions about literacy and social class, Heath leaves no doubt as to why the children she studied came to replicate the status quo. Her research topic thus deals with the nature of literacy, and of becoming literate, without employing poststructuralist means. Alternative readings of the data she presents, by subsequent researchers, could draw alternative and deconstructive readings from her material. The matter of gender, for example, was not dealt with by Heath, although she separately discusses 'girl talk' and 'a stage for boys' amongst her Trackton data.

Bell (1983:10), a feminist anthropologist, set out to learn about women's lives. To do this, she lived and worked within a community of Aboriginal women in central Australia. She viewed herself as learner, and aimed 'to understand and to document women's perceptions' (1983:23). She accepts that she dealt with an issue of unequal access to certain groups of women and also with the fact that as a participant observer she influenced the behaviour of the women she studied. Like Heath, Bell shows that writing ethnography requires implicit explanations of the social and cultural settings for the events and practices being described. Representations cater for a reading audience, who may or may not have first hand experience of similar situations.

In being guided in particular ways by ethnographers, I selected a research practice that is empirical in that it derives its theories from everyday practice. I realize that some ethnographers are against the use of the term when only some aspects of its practice are used (Lutz 1981), but I believe I have conformed to the basic rule of ethnography that Lutz describes:

> *Whether one engages in micro- or macro-ethnography, one should be engaged in the search for meaning!* ...(Lutz, 1981:51)

Marcus and Clifford (1985:269) describe ethnography as inscription which communicates metaphorically 'as stories in the minds of their readers'. They cite Tyler's visions of postmodern ethnography (1984) as 'an emergent and cooperative process of textualization, as the conjunction of fantasy and reality, and as the struggle with a surplus of meanings.' This is perhaps the closest description to what I have tried to do. In the theoretical concludings to this dissertation I take up the notions of metaphor and of inscription. I submit that ethnography allows me to show, and not just to say, what I mean.

Postmodern ethnography can be a research methodology which counteracts 'an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience' (Clifford (1986:2). Clifford claims that ethnography begins with writing, the making of texts, and that 'writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter.' Further he compares the ethnographer who writes with the ethnographer who films. I follow Clifford's advice to be non-objective and non-distanced:

> *In a discursive rather than a visual paradigm, the dominant metaphors for ethnography shift away from the observing eye and toward expressive speech and gesture. The writer's voice pervades and situates the analysis, and objective, distancing rhetoric is denounced.* (Clifford, 1986:12)

In my writing of the research journal I pick up Clifford's notion of metaphor for ethnography. This allows me to write inclusively of the signs and symbols of power, gender and resistance as they appeared to be in force at the school. My own metaphoric writing thus becomes a method for the recording of events and practices. In this way I attempt a methodology that integrates a literary device with the giving of literal information.

The exclusion of feminist voices within ethnography (Clifford and Marcus 1986:17-19) has resulted in limitations and non-feminist foci within ethnography's discursive standpoints. Feminism means more than including women: it means accounting for gaps in knowledge, and this requires studying men as gendered subjects and studying subtleties of phallocentricisms and the gendered politics of power. Gender is constructed differently in different cultures, and such constructions operate as social relationships and as symbols. I have tried to depict some of those at Ruralsville.

Initially feminist anthropologists needed to deconstruct the structure of male bias, but now are identifying the conceptual framework of phallocentricism which underlies their discipline (Moore 1988). The presence of women in women-written ethnographies is qualitatively different from those written by men:

> *Women were present in both sets of ethnographies, but in very different ways.*
> (Moore 1988:1)

Moore (1988:11) predicts that anthropology has the potential to reconstruct feminism, based on its deconstruction of the Western category of woman.

The Ruralsville Fieldwork

The Ruralsville research has a methodology which produces a series of representations of the girls (The Chronology). It supports and counteracts this with additional information and discourses (The Writings and The Interviews).

Following Ball's (1990:158) outline, the fieldwork process began with access, and continued with a series of reflexivities and rapports until disengagement. The data presented as the Chronology is not raw data, but data that has been processed from the moment of its writing by my own theorizing and searching. This means that there was already an analysis being made at the time of my note-writing in the classroom or the playground. Ball (1990:164) says 'the choices made involve the specific deployment of the researcher in terms of where to be, when and with whom.' The Ruralsville Chronology, 'rests firmly upon the researcher's awareness of what it was possible to say given the nature of the data that was and was not collected.' The language of the Chronology is a response to Ball's criticism and advice that:

> *So much ethnographic writing is presented in a sanitized scientific style. The form of presentation of data belies the means employed to collect it. The possibilities of the reflexivity available to the author are denied to the reader. The organic link between data collection and data analysis, and between theory and method, is broken. Presumably we should attempt to relate social theory to research method, substantive theory to epistemology, and presentation and style to ontology.* (Ball, 1990:170)

In summary, the pragmatics of the Ruralsville ethnography were that I worked, occasionally and for three years, with the permission of the girls at the school, the parents, the teacher, the Ministry of Education and La Trobe University's and Deakin University's

Faculties of Education. As a researcher I recorded classroom and extra-classroom happenings and dialogues, visited the girls at their homes and they visited me, collected photocopies of the writing they gave me and interviewed each of them at the end of the research time. The girls were aware of the work I was doing, saw their writing files and discussed the research with me. They know that their names and the name of their school and their teachers are replaced by others. The primary research tool was my self, with my notebook and pen. Additional tools were ones that were able to be operated by the girls themselves: the school's photocopier, a small tape recorder and a small camera.

I see adults' interview techniques with young girls and boys as at best suspect and at worst totally inappropriate because of the huge differences in age, power and language. For these reasons I shunned interviews until the fourth year of the empirical phase (Appendix C), when the girls at least had become used to me. I then asked each girl, in a private place of her choosing and away from the school, to re-read her writing file with me and to talk about the meanings I had made of them. My understandings were modified following these conversations.

The methodology which evolved over the three years of the data gathering phase was a response to my on-going understanding of theories of language and theories of gender construction. Throughout this time I was constantly engaged at the theoretical level, as I read the published and unpublished work of other people, and as I tried to make sense of what I could see happening at the school and in the girls' households. Eventually I became more skilled in gathering the data I sought. This meant that less time was being spent on socially positioning myself as a researcher in the school. Similarly, I later made better use of the couple of blank pages I took to the school each week as a research journal, (which became The Chronology), when I realized that audio recording was not so useful. Here Halliday's advice, about researching the language development of the very young, applies to what I found:

> *The most useful piece of research equipment is a note-book and pencil; and the most important research qualification (as in many other areas) is the ability to listen to language, which is not so difficult to acquire and yet is surprisingly seldom developed.* (Halliday, 1985a:211-212)

For a research question regarding the role of writing in the construction of self, a methodology which involves considering writing as theory and as record, seems appropriate. The counterbalance to writing, which is reading, then becomes a methodology for the analysis of that writing: hence deconstructions follow ethnography in

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this dissertation. In poststructuralist theory, though, these distinctions are broken down. What I have produced as a research practice (the Chronology) represents a move away from the objective and towards the subjective, away from tangible texts and towards discursive relations of production, away from distance and towards closeness; but at the same time I have tried to bring these qualities together. Subjectivity, discourses and closeness are important within feminism; as a researcher, I have tried to produce them as well as study them.

2. Deconstruction

This section explains how I intend linking the foregoing theories regarding feminist poststructuralisms to the analysis of data. It gives information additional to theoretical discussions in Chapter 2 and shows how deconstructions are located as practices. As clarification, it describes examples from selected research that deconstructs from discourses, from interviews and from written texts. This is followed by a consideration of academic writing within postmodernism. A description of the Ruralsville research in relation to deconstructive readings concludes the chapter.

'Recent developments in literary theory have encouraged a "textual" trend in anthropology' (Marcus and Clifford 1985:267), suggesting that ethnography can be understood in ways that transcend disciplinary boundaries. This involves the opening up of the text of ethnography 'to issues of cultural and social production beyond the text'. The Ruralsville data portrays a complex culture of girlhood, with its customary ways of life. How to read those complexities is the problem. I shall attempt to work the Ruralsville data deconstructively, and go beyond seeing the material structures underlying cultural practices. Although Marcus and Clifford acknowledge the possibility of deconstructive readings of ethnographies (1985), they cite no examples. It seems that the ethnographies of Bell (1983), Heath (1983), Jones (1989) and Wolcott (1978) stop short of poststructuralist readings because of particular theoretical frames around their social research findings. In attempting to remove some of these frames, my research findings remain deliberately open to question at the end.

Doing Deconstructions

Deconstructing involves a series of readings against the usual meanings of the data. My research will not operate as Walkerdine's (1985, 1986, 1989) has done to trace how discourses come to be naturalized, but to develop a feminist theory of social positioning via notions of play with difference and deferral. In this way I take my directions more from a Derridean definition than from a Foucauldian one.

Similarly, Spivak (1985:24) sees deconstruction as 'questioning from within, without the sort of arrogance of demolishing'. One of the central ideas she focuses on, following Derrida, is that of 'trace' (Spivak 1976:xiv), which she explains as carrying, in the original French, 'strong implications of track, footprint, imprint'. This means that writing operates as a trace of what was meant, what could be meant and what was not meant.

To produce research findings like this, I needed to devise a way of writing so that the dissertation itself conveys the meanings I worked with. Derrida says deconstruction produces a 'language of its own, in itself' (Derrida 1984, in Lather 1991:10). He calls this kind of writing, writing under erasure. To Lather (1991a:1991b), this means being aware of one's own positioning as a subverter and inscriber. Subversion happens by foregrounding discourses that introduce constructions, and in the Ruralsville case the constructions I focus on are those of gender. Inscription is writing new meanings in place of those dominant, and in the study of the Ruralsville case these meanings are those that come through the deconstructions. Pragmatically, what must be accepted in a Derridean deconstruction, by both writers of it and by readers of it, is the never-satisfactory nature of language, and the poststructuralist theory that language never contains all meaning. For the Ruralsville girls' writing, produced by some linguistic constraints similar to those of this dissertation, the same theory applies.

In practical terms, I intend producing a variety of deconstructions as my readings of the combined events, practices and artefacts researched (Chapter 4). These begin with examples following Foucault's and Derrida's poststructuralisms. I then make specifically feminist readings before branching out into speculatory psychoanalytics. At the ending of the dissertation I try to draw the threads of my deconstructings together to theorize a culture of schoolgirls (Chapter 5). In what follows now I shall be more explicit about the research practices I am following as methodologies of deconstruction. Firstly I consider exemplary practices from education research. A consideration of exemplary practices from outside education follows.

Practices from Education Research

Gilbert, Davies and Walkerdine have each worked with girls, discourses, life texts, published texts and poststructuralist theories. As a group they inform my methodology of deconstruction by showing me what to do and letting me see what poststructuralist theory means in the research practice of reading data. From each of these theorists I have gained something different.

Gilbert (1989a:48) discusses traditional fairy tales which change in resolution and in narrative detail over time. Deconstructions of the changes, she says, show how society sees the gendered subject differently, and hence a very old story must change to meet the demands of those who retell it. From Gilbert I have learned to look at narrative details and story endings to see what they could be reflecting as the positioning of story-tellers. But because the Ruralsville girls are the constructors of their stories, they are likely to be not only reflecting but experimenting with meanings.

A focus on 'the potential for a radical reassessment of the assumptions underlying currently popular writing pedagogy', deconstructs 'concepts of authoring and of literature' (Gilbert 1989c:77). However, although Gilbert describes Derrida's positions on writing, her resultant work is not focussed on the multiple meanings of students' writings, but rather on 'If it (writing) is to be taught, what is to be taught?' (1989c:82). Thus my work and Gilbert's, although about similar issues of writing, schooling and deconstruction, are qualitatively different. Here Gilbert works to directly develop pedagogy, which I have done elsewhere (Rhedding-Jones 1993b). In this dissertation I work to theorize girls' subjective positionings.

Gilbert's chapters on the 'discourses about school writing' (1989c:15-66) operate as descriptors of research about classroom writing practices in general. Chapters about writing in one classroom are entitled 'translating the pedagogy', (1989c:101-162) and detail an Australian year twelve class. Gilbert then deals with 'assumptions upon which the writing tasks had been constructed', and how these were taken up by students and teachers (1989c:126). As an extended deconstruction, Gilbert's work critiques the prevailing view of school writing as a pedagogical act. Her work thus deconstructs some of the discourses of writing research, by describing writing from the perspectives of students and teachers. What dominates in practice, Gilbert shows us, is not always what appears. Although her research in this way demonstrates large-scale deconstruction of education research, it stops short of detailed deconstructive exemplification, which is what I attempt doing with the Ruralsville data. In these ways, Gilbert's work operates at the macro-level and my work at the micro-level.

What Gilbert shows is that current pedagogic theories of reading, writing and literature are not necessarily appropriate for classroom practice and for students. By interviewing selected students Gilbert presents their critique of schooling and concludes that her

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interrogations of events show that the nature of school writing causes student alienation from critical social consciousness and intended writing agendas. In this way Gilbert's work (1989c) means that her deconstruction is a researcher's persistent questioning of practices. Although Gilbert's critique of the theoretical field of writing pedagogy is supported by her contrasted reconstructions of what happens in a year twelve English class, I see deconstruction as more than this. Gilbert's work functions as a deconstruction of writing and schooling, but without specific and multi-theorized deconstructions of particular events and artefacts.

Although Gilbert's students and teachers describe writing differently from the ways it is described by pedagogy theorists, Gilbert's deconstuctions of differences are limited to setting one against the other: thereby perpetuating binary splits. Whilst Gilbert's research alerted me to deconstruction as a research methodology, it appears not to carry out the complex reading practices of Barthes and Derrida, cited together with Foucault (1989c:11). What is deconstructive about Gilbert's work is its function and not its methodological detail.

Poststructuralist theory can be manifest in further theory, in research outcome, in practical outcome and also in research method. I suggest that Gilbert's work is strong in the first three. What I argue for is poststructuralist theory translated into a different research methodology for analysis. To a greater extent, my work is informed by the methodological detail of Davies (1989c:230-231), who has also deconstructed gendered discourse in published writing for girls and boys. She has done this firstly by retelling narrative, without interpretation. She then describes, in terms of gender, its intention, the ways in which its protagonists are portrayed, and the positions or states that they are in. From this, Davies considers girls' and boys' understandings of these protagonists' gendered positionings. Her conclusions are based on what the girls and boys who were the subjects of her case said about the male and female protagonists, and from this, whether they were heroes or non-heroes. Her theory, which attacks male/female dualism, but which still includes the binary opposition of hero/non-hero, is developed from this.

Davies and Banks' analytic strategies present a methodology of transcript selection, of transcript discussion and of theoretically locating subjectivities. Similarly, Davies' (1989c) methodology of presenting a classroom construction of differentiated gender roles, by her reading of classroom events, demonstrates the confirmation of inequality between men and women. I consider how Davies arrives at a point where she can read data in this way. What I seek is a process of deconstruction useful to an understanding of gender constructions in life events. Here Davies method of quoting from one of her transcripts

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exemplifies her points. As a result of reading the transcript extract, Davies then says what is happening through the discursive practices she has exemplified.

Sex differences form the unquestioned and unexamined base on which gender is constructed. The effect of this assumption is obvious at many points in the lesson on sex roles. One example is as follows:

Teacher: What are the differences?
Beck: Well, a woman is capable of, um, having children and so she is expected to stay home and look after the kids?
Teacher: What's that called? There's a name given to that expectation of a woman to be a mother. Adam?
Adam: Stereotype?
Teacher: Right it is ...[my cut in the transcript]
Beck: Um, the woman is expected to stay home and look after the kids because she had them?
Teacher: Had them. She is probably better able to do that. Has anybody heard of paternal instinct? We usually talk about it, don't we, the maternal instinct?...
(Davies, 1989c:232)

Here Davies cuts her transcript to state what she reads as happening:

> *What is happening here is that the pupils, in response to the teacher's questions, are raising a social difference to do with beliefs (expectations , stereotypes) and the teacher is legitimating those beliefs in terms of what he understands about biology (instinct). He then further embeds the biological base in a moral base ...*
> (Davies, 1989c:232-3)

In this reading, Davies describes what she believes is being said as teacher-student dialogue. She then puts this theoretically, by defining parts of what the teacher says as biologically based and parts as morally based. The deconstruction of this two-levelled description is apparent when Davies asserts that the absence of a particular discourse causes this classroom event to take the direction it does:

> *The absence of an appropriate alternative discourse leads the teacher, unwittingly, to knit back up the fabric of the patriarchal social order faster than he can unpick it.*
> (Davies, 1989c:233)

Here Davies makes use of a particularly female metaphor. In the next sentence she takes the poststructuralist position of immediately juxtaposting what she has just found with something else that has happened at the same time:

> *As well he positions Beck as one who is making the same claim that he is. ... Beck is positioned as one who sees the direct and inevitable link between expectation and practice.* (Davies, 1989c:233)

To further present her readings Davies discusses videotape data from another classroom. Her next transcript is from a conversation with this class's teacher, who says what he wants for his students:

> [Teacher]: *I'd like to see them, you know, contributing to society and probably changing a few things in society too. The old traditional values for a start.*
> (Davies, 1989c:233)

Here Davies interrupts her academic voicing of her deconstructions to insert her subjective voice. This is a particularly poststructuralist device as it presents the writer of the research article herself as a non-unified subject:

> *I even found myself at the time I made the video of the classroom imaginatively positioning myself as a girl in this class, wishing I could be one of them.*
> (Davies, 1989c:233)

Davies now brings to her deconstructions the possibilities of the imaginary and desire. She returns to the voice of the academic:

> *The images and narratives through which maleness and femaleness are constituted in the teacher's talk undermine that possibility* [of her wish to be a child in this classroom]. (Davies, 1989c:233)

What I have done in quoting and commenting at some length on Davies' deconstructions is exemplify a deconstructive methodology parallel to my own. Elsewhere (1989c:54-55) Davies has made a series of readings of the same published literary text for children, but the practice of making multiple readings of texts written by girls or boys has not been a part of her research corpus until recently (1993:180-200). Here Davies' co-researcher invited 'children' to 'write their stories at home' after they had been involved in interviews (1993:179).

Davies and Banks (1992) say girls' and boys' understandings of stories are informed by the discourses of gender which are most dominant for them. However, a poststructuralist theory following Derrida does not necessarily produce superlatives, and the notion of being 'the greatest' or 'the most dominant' might be inappropriate. However, Derridean theories of difference and deferral thus produce a problem for research in that we risk making no significant interpretation at all, but simply 'the play of signification infinitely' (Derrida 1978:280). An additional complication for feminists is that some discourses must be seen as more acceptable than others. However, in adopting my particular methodologies I hope to have allowed for findings other than ranking, rating and superlatives.

Lastly, in this section on exemplary practices, I consider some of the early work of Walkerdine (1984a), where she deconstructs girls' comics as cultural products. My purpose here is to uncover the methodological processes by which theoretical positions can be reached. As with my analysis of Davies' deconstructions, I select various fragments of Walkerdine's writing (1984a) and intersperse these with my comments on her research processes.

Walkerdine's (1984a) deconstructions involve a content and narrative analysis of their texts and an examination of the victimization theme selected for analysis. After some theoretical discussion Walkerdine returns to the comics analysed earlier and reconsiders them from a psychoanalytic perspective, locating and naming the female resolution of loss and the displacement of difficult feelings. By her deconstructions Walkerdine gives awareness that the gendered sanctioning and resolving of goodness and badness, of niceness and naughtiness, through fantasy writing and through daily living, is important to the construction of the feminine.

She begins by stating that she will explore 'dynamics in symbolic form' (1984a:163), and offers her first and literal synopsis of a comic:

> *a 'happy ever after' situation in which the finding of the prince (the knight in shining armour, 'Mr Right') comes to seem like a solution to a set of overwhelming desires and problems.* (Walkerdine, 1984a:163)

She warns that she will examine:

how those practices within the text itself have relational effects that define who and where we are.(Walkerdine, 1984a:164-165)

and names the comics she will examine, saying that :

> *for the most these stories develop themes of family relationships.*
> (Walkerdine, 1984a:165-166, as is each of her quotations hereafter)

Here she comments that:

> *To do so, they use particular kinds of narrative device,*

and states that she will:

> *concentrate particularly on those devices.*

When Walkerdine returns to her presentation of the comic texts, (1984a:169) she begins to work deconstructively by making a list of thematic points about seven comics where girls live with their parents. From this, Walkerdine locates a theme of serving and selflessness which she says recurs. Quoting from the comics, and placing a graphic copy of a comic's page beside her analysis, she exemplifies her reading of the victim theme which appears to function discursively throughout the comics (1984a:172). Looking again at the same comics, Walkerdine says that 'girls are not presented with heroines who ever get angry' (1984a:173). This poststructuralist focus on lack allows then for Walkerdine to say that:

> *'Such girls will always fail: how can they possibly be selfless enough?'*
> (Walkerdine, 1984a:174)

Asking a question is part of the deconstructive process Walkerdine has set up, where her reader has now herself become a questioner of the themes and discourses of the girls' comic genre. Soon after this Walkerdine can present her theory of struggle, femininity and female sexuality (1984a:175). She follows this with theoretical discussion before introducing psychoanalysis as a dynamic model contrasting with rationalism (1984a:177). The link she then makes with the deconstructions made earlier is that narratives of girls' early tortuous relations with their families suggest a subject closer to a psychoanalytic account of femininity than to a rational account.

I make this detailed description of Walkerdine's work (1984a) not because the psychoanalysis I shall explore is anything like the point she is making here. I make it because I want to show how deconstructions can leap from consistently returning to read particular texts or discourses to producing new theory. There is a shock function in this that traditional analysis of data does not have. Walkerdine connects fantasy engagements of comic readers with fantasy engagements in life (1984a:180), although as a poststructuralist she typically negates her findings on occasions:

> *Thus comics do not 'tell it like it is' there is no psychic determinism which they represent.* (Walkerdine, 1984a:180)

Briefly, at the end and amongst theoretical discussions of Lacan, Walkerdine swiftly presents a one-sentence summary of a fairy tale and follows this with a one-sentence deconstruction of it:

> *In one feminist reworking of a classic fairy tale the princess, instead of marrying the prince, goes off to be a feminist decorator in dungarees! What we need to ask here is how such texts operate at the level of fantasy.* (Walkerdine, 1984a:183)

The deconstructive question, about how the text functions as fantasy, is a question I shall be asking amongst my own deconstructions. Like Walkerdine, I intend integrating theoretical comment with deconstructive readings so that together they produce a different research impact.

Walkerdine (1984b:160-161) uses deconstruction to consider assumptions contained in formulations of questions about a girl's play. She argues that because these particular questions have been asked, then play is seen as having various functions in the minds of the girl's teachers. By deconstructing the meanings of the play in this way, Walkerdine is able to link teacher-training to a related pedagogy of certainty, such as those that still typify much of pre-service and post-service teacher education. In this way, Walkerdine builds up her critique of Piaget-based developmental psychology and 'child-centred' pedagogy. Deconstructively reading the questions about one girl's 'emotional/social' records enables Walkerdine to show how teachers are trained to 'recognize and classify' significant activities. That Walkerdine advocates the research role of deconstruction in social practices is clear:

> *I hope that I have identified the necessity of deconstructing the taken-for-granted basis of developmental psychology itself. That is, I have deconstructed the power-*

> *knowledge relations central to the production of the object of developmental psychology itself.* (Walkerdine, 1984b:194)

Practices from Outside Education Research

There are similarities between the ways deconstructions function as research strategies. First of all these include a disregard for the meaning that may at first appear to be the most important and a search for the point when the discourse underlying the surface meaning is suddenly apparent. Secondly, there is a willingness to not shy away from what seems impossible to research, and this may then involve accepting more than one meaning at once, or arriving at no conclusion. Thirdly, there is identification and dispersal of binaries and oppositions, such as negatives and positives, dependents and independents. In these ways deconstruction reveals the construction of discourses, and poststructuralism becomes a discourse on discourse. Feminist poststructuralism, in these ways and in its own ways, produces a unique discourse of constructs and critiques.

Further to the deconstructive practices of Gilbert, Davies and Walkerdine, which deal specifically with girls and learning, I now present additional information about deconstruction from Spivak, Johnson, Opie and Gavey. This information, although sometimes in conflict with research from education, also informs my research. Opie and Gavey, whose work is respectively based in sociology and in psychology, give me directions for how to find particular datum points in discourses where deconstructive readings might have particular potential for research findings. In Spivak's and in Johnson's cases, their deconstructive methodology/critique is a literary one, and I have already argued that reading the Chronology (Appendix B) almost as a novel is a possible practice for its re-search. Similarly, the narrative writings of the girls (Appendix A) may differ qualitatively very little from (literary) writing (of adults) that is published. It follows, then, that employing literature-based research models may be appropriate. Particularly when deconstruction has its own history of literary applications, and has perhaps been appropriated by social researchers, it would seem to be a good idea to go back to its applications by literary critics and see what it is that they do. In studying subjectivity and writing I have pitched my research theoretically between a social study, a psychoanalytic study and a (literary?) language study. By the methodology I have devised I hope to stay there.

Spivak (1987, 1990) rejects assumptions of mechanical and binary oppositions. Without categorizing, she produces a series of critiques, openings, comments, theorizings, insertions, implications. Most of her work is dense, linking to discourses of post-colonialism, philosophy, history and what she calls 'texts of cultural self-representation' (1991:165). These texts are nothing like the 'texts of cultural self-representation' that the Ruralsville girls produced, and there is much that I cannot understand in what Spivak writes. (But I am still filled with the memory of her powerful and physical presence at a conference in Adelaide in 1986, and this is what makes me persevere.) My understanding of Spivak is that the lines of her deconstructions are provided by her own theoretical and personal groundings, and that these include Indian postcolonialism, literary training, feminism and Marxist materialism. I hope to give enough information about myself in this dissertation to show how I am trying to ground my work personally as well as theoretically, and that I see the personal and the theoretical as intertwined.

As an example of Spivak's writing, which is a methodology in itself, and which has led me into being more adventurous now with my own, I quote from the ending of her paper on 'feminism in decolonization' (1991). Here Spivak's advice regards deconstructing historical method, but I may be able to take it to apply also to deconstructing a schoolgirl culture at a particular school:

> *a deconstructive critique of what is called "the historical method" can only be undertaken if the writer is so intimately placed within that method that she would not have to ask "What is it?" (Derrida, Grammatology 24). (Gathering data, establishing evidence, considering counter-examples, persuasively stating conclusions?) This writer is clearly not in such a position. You can only deconstruct what you love.*
>
> (Spivak, 1991:165)

The effect of Spivak's writing on me is shock at the last sentence, slow understanding that it is historical method which is queried by the list of words in brackets, defence of my position at Ruralsville as a researcher who has placed herself as 'intimately' as possible, awareness of the impossibility of knowing another culture in anything like the degree necessary to research it on Spivak's terms, enjoyment of the play and the art of language, a wondering about Derrida, a realization that another short paragraph remains unread at the end of Spivak's article.

I have made this list because I need to show that Spivak's own writing is a part of her deconstructions. It is not only what she says, but the way that she says it that allows the text to continue to deconstruct after it appears to have been read. I would like my research writing to have some of these qualities for these reasons. Spivak's work manages to raise new insights by not only its content. Additionally, her approach is different in that it ranges across a vast array of fields, it questions not explicitly but implicitly and it operates as a succession of undoings of expectations and orthodoxies. Bluntly, Spivak (1985:26) says of her work 'I'm very eclectic, and I use what I can find.' I have tried to follow her pattern and research for this thesis what I have found, not only at Ruralsville but elsewhere and in theory. Working eclectically has meant for me removing the blinkers of mono-disciplinary reading and the limitations of working from only transcripts or only written texts as data.

Spivak's advice about deconstruction is that 'to find the undertone is to undo the overtone' (Spivak 1985:26). I have assumed by this that finding a potentially powerful point for deconstruction's focus means that whole fabrics of wider meanings can be unpulled. For example, locating parts of the girls' writing where their engagement with femininity discourses is particularly strong, or wavering or contradictory, means that from any of these points something important may be said. Finding the undertones of the girls' writing then, may lead to undoing some of the phallocentric overtones and their discursive effects. Not wanting to leave the research there, I shall then try to rework some feminist theories relating to subjectivity. In the process perhaps new theoretical insights about language and culture may be made. In these ways Spivak's seemingly simple advice informs not only my methodology but the thesis it seeks to establish.

Spivak demonstrates her process of deconstruction with applications to postcolonialism and to literature. Her methodology/critique firstly involves a summary of the narrative at the surface level of action:

> *The story ... can be summarized as follows: With the coming of the railway station, Raju's father's shop moves up in class.* (Spivak, 1991:144)

It then includes a statement regarding the representation of the character selected for focus, and is followed by a discussion of the way the novel is written:

> *The novel is not arranged in this straightforward way...We are not aware that the account is a confession ...we only know these motives towards the end of the book.*
> (Spivak, 1991:145)

Spivak's discussion involves consideration of a reader's reactions and developing awareness of the narrative. It also involves a knowledge of the power of the story teller in relation to the acceptance of the reader:

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> *To put it in code, the reader begins to say "yes" to Raju's past by inhabiting the roguish personality of a past character so unlike that of the present. That is the historically established power of the indirect free style of storytelling.*
>
> (Spivak, 1991:145)

Next Spivak introduces a second novel to her deconstruction of Indian colonial history. Here, after again describing a narrative, she deconstructs what she has already said by presenting another level of meaning :

> *This story is not just a boy-girl story, however. It is also a decently muted tale of access to folk-ethnicity.* (Spivak, 1991:147)

With my readings of the Ruralsville stories I intend juxtaposing one against the other and re-telling the narratives so that many possibilities can be seen in meaning. Like Spivak, my purpose in doing so is to deconstruct something larger than the stories. In my case I shall work the writings into a developing thesis. To do this I shall quote from the girls' writing in support of the analyses I shall make, as does Spivak with the novels:

> *Rosie has tried to lift herself from the patriarchal ethos by going the route of institutional Western education. But dancing is in her blood..."She watched it swaying with the raptest attention. She stretched out her arm slightly and swayed in an imitation of the movement; she swayed her whole body to the rhythm ..."*
>
> (Spivak, 1991:148)

Now Spivak focuses on selected chapters or episodes where the issues being considered are represented, and she includes quotations to show that this is so. By this she questions, not only answers, what is happening. Next she successively interrogates the same episode, so that many meanings become apparent:

> *Although the dancer is not central to the novel, a feminist reader or teacher in the U.S. might wish to know a little more about the temple dancer in order to grasp the representation of Rosie/Nalini.* (Spivak, 1991:148)

Here Spivak inserts the subjectivity of an additional reader into her deconstruction of the episode where Raju first meets the (educated) dancer. She also presents the non-unified subject as a protagonist in the novel, by inserting the slashed punctuation between the two names. In these ways the deconstructions become more heavily loaded, as Spivak deals with discourses of gender and of 'class-race' (1991:149). At this point Spivak has imaginary representative readers from each of these critical positions located within her discussions, and tells us what it is each of them finds in the text. In doing so she makes an analysis of the question of agency, and how literature functions in relation to it. This involves a discussion of the positioning of the character studied, whether that character was in a position of power or not, and why. Again, quotations are given as examples. All of this seems to be directed towards Spivak's theorization of history:

> *Popular history is then not judged as the absence of history ... In the context of the history of the present, this "inability to speak" (as agent) is brought about by what is called "ventriloquism".* (Spivak, 1991:153)

Here I realize that what I initially said about the content of Spivak's article not being contentually related to my thesis is quite wrong. Skipping five pages in my reading, the next point of departure for Spivak's deconstruction is film (1991:158), which she says 'speaks *for* India'. Telling us that this is so then allows acceptance of film as a voice representing a place. Although this cannot be literal, it is a strategy I borrow when I read the girls' writing as if it were the voices of the girls.

Spivak disrupts her sentence-style writing to make three points which she labels (a), (b) and (c), (1991:160), before making a postmodern exposure of her own writing's framework. Here she speculates about her uses of film and of novel as examples of her theory, and tells us that really she is focussing on the relationship between them:

> *In this passage the making of the film is parenthetical, and perhaps what one is discussing in the present essay is the relationship between the text and the parenthesis.* (Spivak, 1991:161)

In this way, my intention in juxtaposing girls' writing and my own is to research their relationships and differences. In one sense the Chronology is in parenthesis to the writing of the girls, but in another sense it is the other way around. Having considered one particular article of Spivak's in some detail so that I can justify some of my writing as deconstruction, I now consider directions I shall take from Johnson (1980, 1987).

Salusinszky (1987:151) describes Johnson as 'one of the best-known of the second generation deconstructors'. While this reads like sales pitch, it serves to introduce her as a translator of Derrida, as is Spivak, and as a major contributor to questions of sexual difference as depicted in literature. She says:

> *It seems to me that women are all trained, to some extent, to be deconstructors. There's always a double message, and there's always a double response.*
>
> (Johnson, in Salusinszky, 1987:151)

I would like to take this assumption further than double-ness, although I would think Johnson also sees multiplicity rather than duality. She suggests techniques for reading *différence*, and advises that:

> *The starting point is often a binary difference that is subsequently shown to be an illusion created by the working of differences much harder to pin down. ... The "deconstruction" of a binary opposition is thus not an annihilation of all values and differences; it is an attempt to follow the subtle, powerful effects of differences already at work within the illusion of a binary opposition. ... Difference is a form of work to the extent that it plays beyond the control of any subject: it is, in fact, that without which no subject could ever be constituted.* (Johnson, 1980:x-xi)

It is through these complexities that I attempt to write this thesis, to theorize subjectivity, and to devise a deconstructive method. Their production ordering was mostly the reverse of this, although at many times they co-incided. Specifically, I take Johnson's advice that:

> *The point at which deconstruction chooses to cut is often a reflexive moment, a moment where the text seems to comment on itself or on its own processes of composition.* (Johnson, in Salusinszky 1987:162)

Opie (1989) demonstrates this clearly in her deconstructions of conversational events when the women she interviewed changed the direction of their thinking. Opie describes women (spouses and adult children) who worked as informal caregivers to the severely confused elderly. Opie's data is a series of interviews, which she refers to as texts:

> *Interspersed through some texts are different moments which speak of love and affection and regard which mitigate the tensions of the role, and which disrupt and qualify the dominant reading of the exploitation.* (Opie, 1989:4)

As an example of finding the moment of discursive disruption, and thereby the point for deconstructing, Opie quotes a 71 year old care-giver, who says:

> *Well as I say, um, my husband is happy at home and I am happy to have him at home ...and I feel that ... once he went away perhaps it wouldn't be the same and I*

> *think he's getting to that stage now and perhaps if he went away as long as he was fed and looked after, it wouldn't really matter.* (Opie, 1989:4)

Here we glimpse a moment of reflexion which leads to subjective transformation of meaning. It is moments like these I seek in the girls' writing. Opie's example also supports the theory that it is through the saying of language that meanings can be changed, and this is one of the theories which originally prompted my focus on writing and its possibilities for the construction of subjectivity.

Openings similar to those produced by Opie's location of deconstruction-points also occur in Gavey (1989:469). Gavey, who describes herself as 'feminist and poststructuralist in terms of theoretical perspectives' (1989:468), researched moments of interviews when women discussed their regretted sexual experiences. From these Gavey locates discourses of what she calls 'permissive sexuality' and 'male sex needs'. These discourses are open to deconstruction at the points where they occur in the interviews. An example of the first discourse is:

> *Um as I said before it didn't mean that much to me, so basically I lay down on the bed.* (Gavey, 1989:469)

The second discourse can be exemplified by:

> *his manhood was going to be dashed if he didn't go to bed with me.*
> (Gavey, 1989:469)

Deconstructing from her selected discursive examples then follows.

One of the qualities of working with data such as this is its proximity to women readers' lives. In some ways the Ruralsville data is also close to women, and this may make the process of locating the potential points for deconstruction easier. In this way I am not denying my subjective engagement with the data and its effects on my methodology; nor does Gavey deny hers.

Further to the finding of data openings for deconstructions, Johnson says she focuses on respect for silences, or forking paths, in the text (in Salusinszky 1987:162). This practice, she says, is more useful than being drawn to a writer's more attractive moments of self-reflection, where 'the circle remains too small'. Johnson says:

> *in order to be truly deconstructive, you have to constantly move the locus of your questions, not just to move on to another text. You'd have to say, " What am I doing, sitting talking like this, in this institution?" And "Why am I reading this text?" Instead of just, "This text is a given, now let me read it".* (Johnson, 1987:158)

Thus Johnson, who deconstructs published literary writing, informs mine which regards social practice, events and artefacts. Here this means that instead of considering one girl's writing and then moving on to consider another's, I must stop and shift my own position as a questioner and return to the first girl's discursively constructed text.

In this way, Opie (1989) can be seen to read the meanings of her data derived from her case regarding caring women's exploitation. Opie deconstructs the discourses of love, care and affection to find elements which disrupt and qualify these dominant readings. To do this she shifts her own position from one which values the unpaid work of the women to one which sees it as their exploitation. From the interviews, then, what the women say about their subjectivity can be read by Opie as being important at the points where these disruptions occur. Thus the focus of Opie's research is on the opening up of meanings by her challenging of textual authority and by her new assessment of the worlds of the women who participated in the study. Similarly, I shall at times focus on the points of contradiction and complication in my readings of the Ruralsville discourses.

Specifically, in terms of the Ruralsville ethnography, all of this information leads to a method of analysis that gives evidence of more than one point of view, that operates intertextually, that avoids binary logic, that uncovers the deconstructions of the girls themselves, that affirms the positives about the girls, that faces ambiguity, that goes beyond appearances, that pinpoints the reflexive moments, that focuses on silences, that changes the locus of questioning, that is textually self-conscious.

Academic Writing

Producing research involves not only a method of data collection and a means of analysing the data, but a way of writing about it. Producing poststructuralist research within the field of literature has resulted in highly innovative academic writing (Barthes 1975, Derrida 1976, Spivak 1987). This writing is characterized by open statements, multiple meanings and radical questionings. It goes beyond the basis of its analysed literary texts to deconstruct both culture and literature generally. To work initially with a micro-ethnography, by analogy, should mean opening up a range of possible meanings for the events, texts and sites researched, by leaving matters of 'truth' and positivity out.

Ball and Bowe (1990) link the writing of research to Barthes' descriptions of reading, as either allowing the reader to self-consciously join in as a co-author or not to. When structuralist relationships of signifier and signified are delineated, reading makes readers consumers of writing. When such structuralism is taken away or is added to, the reading opens itself up to the reader. Seeing through, to something beyond, is a critical and creative response to the text, and akin to the critical creativeness that caused it to be written. The practices of writing research, though, are constantly changing to match both the language of the worlds around us and that world itself. One of the main functions of research is its suspension of taken for granted assumptions. A function of poststructuralist research is to challenge single-minded values and authoritarianisms. To do so requests a challenge to academic discourse itself.

What do you do as an academic writer after you've met poststructuralism? A poststructuralist position is that there is no after. Or before. All of this happens constantly. And you don't really meet it, it dawns on you slowly. Following Derrida means working not with frames, but framing. What poststructuralists do is describe the world differently. It is possible, though not usual, to work poststructurally with highly structured data, such as statistics or systemic linguistic analysis, in conjunction with other forms of data or with other readings of the same. What is most apparent on the surface of poststructuralist research, as compared to qualitative research in general, is the acceptance of difference. This difference lies not only in the theorizing and lack of singular conclusion, but in the crafting of the writing about it.

For poststructuralists following Derrida there is not the kind of satisfaction granted to Foucault followers: whereas Foucault enables the theorizing of social power and education change, (and in practice does not exclude structuralist readings), Derrida (who does not allow for structuralism in theorizing or in writing) enables us only to claim the ever-continuing deference of meaning. This form of analysis and criticism, however, contributes interpretation, criticism and evaluation to pragmatism (Cherryholmes 1988:185). In Derridean poststructuralism, there is rigorous scholarship, constant quest for knowledge, continual trying on of different interpretations, going back over and over again to the data, reading and rereading other people's textual theorizings, keeping up to date with what is being said or published, staying thirsty for words, keeping on writing, writing into the text, writing against the text. In feminist poststructuralist theory there is all of this and a re-membering for women (Rhedding-Jones, forthcoming, a).

Turning away from the relative security of claiming neutrality, and of serving the status quo, means not only abolishing binary distinctions and being unafraid of the appearance of disorder. It means presenting these abolitions and unafraid stances in ways that are appropriate. This involves language written and spoken, language of other media and of other genres, and gaps, silences and non-verbal aspects of language such as the body. Poststructuralism's impact is only just beginning to be felt on traditional research writing practices in education. Beyond the use of the 'I' of ethnography and the italics font of the computer, poststructuralists expect deconstructive readers who will open up writing for themselves to semantics beyond those intended by the writer. Past traditions of single dimension meanings, and linear progressions for the arguments that result in such conclusions, are not always adhered to.

Lather (1991a:83-112) for example, tells four different stories about her data. These narrative vignettes resulted from her three year data collection period. Methodologically, Lather's data gathering patterns involved a team of researchers, interviews, research reports, journal entries, and the musings and insights of the researchers. As a means of deconstructing meanings, of presenting information capable of various readings, and of inserting herself into the academic text she constructs, Lather challenges the expectations of those who seek to understand what she says. In doing so, she goes beyond anticipated frameworks, or structures, for ordering her work. In these ways:

> *Authority comes not from adherence to "objective" method, but from engagement and the willingness to be self-reflexive.* (Lather, 1991a:92)

This self-reflexivity involves the researcher in being not only a part of the situation being studied, but also in being present in the resultant academic text. For Lather, there are four ways of acceptably presenting data to a postmodern reading audience: the self-reflexive, the realist, the deconstructivist and the critical. By reflexive, Lather (1991:87) means that the teller of the tale is brought 'back into the narrative, embodied, desiring, invested in a variety of often contradictory privileges and struggles'. By realist, she means 'worlds knowable through adequate method and study'. By deconstructivist, she means 'mov[ing] against stories that appear to tell themselves ... stories that foreground the unsaid in our saying'. By critical, she means 'stories which assume underlying structures for how power shapes the social world.' In following Lather in these ways, I also adopt her feminist postmodernist view that:

> *Data are used differently: rather than to support an analysis, they are used demonstratively, performatively.* (Lather, 1991:106)

I intend the Chronology not only as a data source for analysis but as performance literature. Similarly, the Preface, Interlude and Epilogue to the dissertation imply a written theatre.

A poststructuralist approach to writing, such as is demonstrated by Lather (1991b), by Flax (1990:40) and by Jones (1990:3-22), challenges the status quo of research products. This happens textually by the juxtapositions of a range of genres, by addressing decentred reading audiences within the text, by layering meanings, and by the occasional personal inclusion of research writers and bodies. The insertion of subjectivity into discourse is an additionally important positioning in feminism (Nicholson 1990:3). As a result, academic writing choices are becoming a means of transforming traditional/modern/patriarchal conclusions to research.

Grosz, for example (1990:187), in describing the work of Lacan, breaks new ground within academic genres by concluding, not beginning, her final chapter by giving her reader this choice about Lacan: 'Does his work affirm or undermine phallocentrism? Or does it do both?' Grosz's ending to her chapter is important syntactically and philosophically in that it gives authority not to herself as the writer but to her reader (Rhedding-Jones 1991c). Further, she allows that reader to position herself as a non-unified subject. As a model for academic writing, this device of Grosz's raises questions about the nature of research as well as about the nature of the work of Lacan. As Grosz sees, interpretations may not need to be presented as a choice between one or the other. Within poststructuralist theory, one meaning can sit happily alongside another.

A series of imagined conversations between theorists of differing persuasions is also an effective device for analysis (Flax 1990). In this way Flax interrogates feminism, postmodernism and psychoanalysis without resorting to linear or binary ways of thinking or being:

> *By creating conversation in which each theory in turn is the dominant but not exclusionary voice, I can assess both the insights and the limitations of each mode of thinking separately and together in relation to (my research) problems.*
> (Flax, 1990:15)

Similarly, the introduction of the imaginary and a play with perspectives together produce knowledge through difference and deferral. Spivak in dialogue with Grosz, says:

> *When one says "writing" it means this kind of structuring of the limits of the power of practice, knowing that what is beyond practice is always organizing practice.*
> (Spivak, 1990:2)

This begs a definition of writing not shown in traditional academic writing. The structuring of limits that Spivak theorizes are far removed from the signs of structuralism. The desires that Spivak has for her own work are those of discontinuity and lack of elegant coherence (Spivak 1990:15). This is a total turn-about from the theorizing, writing and logic we are used to. Spivak (1988:84) calls it the 'reversal-displacement morphology of deconstruction'. In her writing such reversal-displacements are uniquely her own.

The exemplified research methodologies mean that academic writing operates not only through argument but through illustration, juxtaposition, metaphor and subjectivity. In short the writing becomes a discourse of signification. This means, amongst other things, that the meaning of texts and discourses can never be exhausted.

The Ruralsville Deconstructions

The segments of data selected for analysis will be deconstructed/described in a number of ways linking to my discursive frames of reference (Chapter 2). This textual practice will operate as a methodology for the analysis of data. What I shall do is try to find the points at which each girl begins to produce gendered meaning, and where she acts as a conscious thinking subject with regard to her own femininity. Does she do this by resolving, through language, the conflicting discourses that surround her? Additionally, states of flux may also be able to be read through discursive textual locations. From this I look at the girls as a culture rather than as separate subjects.

In the research methodology set up in this chapter there are particular problems, though. I shall name these here and attempt to deal with them towards the end of the dissertation. In looking for aspects of femininity in the girls' writing, I am implicitly seeking to confirm its existence (however it is defined). The question is: what would serve as disconfirming evidence? In Chapter 5 I shall try to deal with issues of gender and of fantasy from their counterpart positions, that is, from the point of view of the writing of boys and from any later evidence that what I saw. This could include, for example, my discovery that what I thought was a girl's imaginary or fictionalized writing was in fact a real-life account. I hope by such self-critique to at least reduce what may be my own tendency to over-romanticize the girls' overturning of dominant discourses, amongst other things. In focussing on girls and on theories of resistance and agency, it may be that I sometimes overlook discourses of confinement and accommodation. I shall attempt to balance my readings by this awareness as the analysis chapters progress.

In summary, this chapter indicates appropriate practices for the conduct of my research. Methodologically my deconstructions should be able to show how writing operates as gendered text, and how the writer constructs herself as a gendered subject. Rather than ask the girls, at the time of the writing, what they meant by each text, I read their other texts, and considered the spoken and unspoken language of the classroom and the playground in my searches for discursive meanings. Interviewing each girl in year four of the study threw additional light on what these meanings are, at least from the positioning which the girls had at the time of the interview. My focus is thus on the girls themselves. To maintain this, I kept re-reading the texts of their writing, of their interviews with me and of my own writing at the school. In practice, this meant that 1993 was the fifth year of my reconsiderings of the 1989 texts, the fourth of the 1990 texts, the third of the 1991 texts.

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Interlude

This insertion of a piece of expository and descriptive writing is intended to give a picture of the Ruralsville school where I conducted the research over the three years. It also gives factual information about each of the girls in the study, using pseudonyms instead of real names. Additionally, it describes a little of the households where each girl lived. This information is supported here by some photographic material and by some photocopies of the writing. There is also a list of the titles, with year dates, of each girl's writing. Key events and writings that will be the focus of deconstructions in Chapter 4 are presented here.

The Town

Ruralsville is tiny. There is a pub, a fire brigade, a public phone in its box and a primary school. Apart from some scattered houses and paddocks of cows, that is all. It takes five minutes to drive to a town a bit bigger and twenty minutes to drive to a city of 25,000 people.

The School

The primary school is in a side street. It has a driveway like a farm except that the gate is open. There are about ten small bikes in the corrugated iron bike shed which is beside a row of drinking taps. The school building itself is a wooden one-room classroom with a little entrance porch up a couple of steps. At the end of the entrance porch is a sink and a fridge and behind the wall is a tiny storeroom where the girls and boys sometimes read or talk. On the other side of the schoolroom is a locked-up shelter shed, a water tank, some climbing bars, a free-standing brick wall, a vegetable garden and a double set of toilets.

Inside the schoolroom there are desks in rows for the older children and tables with chairs for the younger ones. There is a blackboard at the front and a teacher's desk at the back. The room is crammed full of the paraphernalia primary schools accumulate and looks much the same from one year to the next. The difference is that the children in the seats are not the same children who sat in them the previous year. Every year all the girls and boys move back a row, so that as the oldest leave the school to go on, the newest old can take their places. So I have seen Kylie aged four sit at the tables for the youngest, then at five become the oldest at a table, then at six move to a desk. Similarly, I have seen the back row on the right filled first by Eve and Margaret, and the following year by Chloe and Lucy after Eve and Margaret were too old for primary school.

If all of this makes Ruralsville school seem traditional or boring, let me assure you that most of it isn't. These children are free to walk around whenever they like, call out to each other or to their teacher, work outside if the weather is fine, sit on the floor or the desktops, suggest that it's time for play or ring the bell. And they do. They also learn to do many things, to value each other, to work hard, to laugh together. Some years there are fourteen or so of them. When the school grew quite big an extra teacher had to be found for a term until the numbers dropped again. But otherwise Mr B runs the whole school by himself, teaching every one of the seven year levels at once, all day long, year in and year out. He's amazingly able at doing this. And at making the whole school happy, productive, casual and effective. If my children were at primary school still I'd really like them to go to school at Ruralsville. It's a terrific place for them to grow up in.

The Girls

In year one of the research Kylie was still four at the start of the year. Jane was seven and Donna and Lucy were eight. Natasha was there briefly as a six year old, but she left because her mother shifted, so she's not really in the study. Chloe, I found out later, was new to the school that year, though she was nine. And Eve and Margaret were eleven, twelve by the end of the year.

No new girls came to the school until after I'd finished all my three years of work there. Chloe became the oldest, and chummed up with Lucy. This left Donna out on her own and she seemed to hang around with Jane. Kylie stayed the youngest girl for three years, and she's the youngest in her family too. Chloe is her sister, but there are two others who are older. Donna and Margaret are also sisters, but Eve's an only. Between them the girls' parents include a truck driver, a tourist information officer, an artist, a bus driver, a women's refuge worker, a builder and three teachers. Like Kylie and Chloe's parents, and also Lucy's, Donna and Margaret's moved out to Ruralsville so they could have a bit of a farm but still drive in to town to work. Actually, Eve's parents did the same thing, and I think Jane's might have too. Housing's not too expensive here and you can buy a bit of land and still commute. There must be some real 'locals' in the town somewhere. Maybe they're the boys' parents.

The Families

All of the families in the study have animals they look after at home. Dogs, chooks, horses, cats with kittens, cows in the paddocks and pet calves around the house, fish in tanks, a tortoise. What I wasn't expecting was the parents' occupations and the amount of travel the families had done. Somehow I arrived with the stereotypical expectation of finding rural families with generations of farming behind them and housebound mothers serving up homemade cakes. Instead I found fathers making me pizza, fathers who showed me the chooks, fathers who thought my research was a load of crap, parents who both worked out of town till six o'clock, girls riding motor bikes, groups of girls at the one house after school, boys asking why I didn't study them, mothers who wanted to talk. I also found in myself a guilt that I was producing nothing, and that the work I was doing wasn't work at all.

The Girls' Writing

This is a list of the pieces of writing each girl wrote. Sometimes I am not sure now of all the exact dates when they were written. I've left the spelling mistakes in. Of course, it takes a long time to produce a sentence or two when you start learning how to write. And when the girls began to write pages and pages as one story this took them weeks and weeks of hard work. They had a set time each Tuesday when they could do this free kind of story writing, although some of the writing I've included here is from the news sentences in their daily diaries.

Mr B more or less left them to it until they had to have it checked over for mistakes. He got them to copy it out nicely, by hand or on the computer, when it was all fixed up. That's what he called the final draft. Sometimes

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the version the girls gave me was the final one and sometimes it was an early one. You can probably tell which is which by how much is wrong with it. Though if you saw the real piece and not just the typed up version that I've done for this thesis you'd quickly know the difference by how neat it is, or how messy. I've put the girls' ages beside the lists of what they wrote. This isn't absolutely everything, but it's everything they said I could have. Of course I didn't take their original stuff away; their Mums have mostly still got all of it at home in folders. All of what I've got is the photocopies they said I could make or they made for me. To say thank you I gave the school packets of A4 paper and books for the library. One Christmas I gave each of the girls a book as a present when I saw them at home. Here is the list of what the girls wrote. Some of the titles mean Mr B told them what to write about, but mostly they thought it up for themselves.

Kylie (aged four to seven)

Kangaroo (1989) Donkey (7.3.89) One day Tim was asleep (14.3.89) I am getting car sick (11.7.89) Jeanette (17.10.89) We have cows (31.10.89) I am going to a birthday party (1989) Mr B is a good teacher (1989) the night I helped Santa (1989)

I like to go shopping (6.2.90) I have a horse (1990) On the weekend (19.3.90) Murnalong Show (1990) a butafdlday it was (1990) I like to do very hard sums (1990) I brought my petite ponies (10.9.90) I have one very small filling (13.9.90) I think school is fun (11.10.90)

The lion gets away (1991) The wild woolley child (30.4.91) The best thing (14.5.91) My owner left me (28.5.91) Mum said to pack my bags (4.6.91) the circus (9.9.91) We have two Chinese men (1991) Little red Riding Hood (1991) When I went to Perth (1991) My magic spell (1991)

Jane (aged seven to ten)

My friend (30.5.89) I played cards (1.8.89) Today I played Monopoly (2.8.89) Today I have come back to school (10.9.89) yesterday I went to Chloe's house (1.11.89) Yesterday i went to Nanna's house (5.11.89) Yesterday Matthew and I went to Casey's house (6.11.89) The day the school burnt down (1989) Santa on holiday (1989)

Today I am going to Donna's house (13.2.90) Yesterday (15.2.90) Many hands make light work (20.2.90) I went to see Pa (26.2.90) I am saving up (27.2.90) What hapning in the school (1990)

Slumber Party (11.2.91) On Saturday (5.3.91) Us (1991) An adjeclive (1991) today is the last day of school (12.4.91) On the Easter holidays (30.4.91) yesterday mum got me some new shoes (1.5.91) The day I got my licence (May 1991) Today I am having my school photo (22.5.91) Today we are going to see the Wizard of Oz (24.5.91) Yesterday I went to see the Wizard of Oz (25.5.91) Yesterday after school (1991) King Edmund crown slips (1991) Hey diddle diddle (1991) Rotton apples on toast (1991) The day I turned 21 (1991) Best in the world (1991) The savage salad (1991) My pet alligator (1991) The gost house (1991) Don't forget to feed the dinosaur (1991) Magic boots (1991) Ruralsville Cup (1991) Super Donna (1991)

Donna (eight to twelve)

What I don't want to be (Feb.1989) Easter bunny (1989) The day I met a witch (1989) The day I got a bird (1989) The day I got a car (1989) Because it had a dimond (1989) negbus (1989) Mum gave me a spoon (23.8.89) Today Miss Sharpe is here (27.8.89) On Friday (3.9.89) Yesterday (18.10.89) After school (1989) My new trac suit (1989) The ghost house (1990) The day the school went on camp (1990) Punchinello (1990) Tis midnight (1990) Yesterday (8.10.90) On Saterday (22.10.90) The buffalo (1990) Beg parding beg (1990) Cinderella (1990) A farmer and sons (1990) The fire at school (1990) The day I went in a rocket (1990) Six smelly fat feet (1990)

I got my licheneds (11.2.91) Haunted house (1991) The day I got madreyed (1991) The three pigs (1991) I am a dog (1991) Us (1991) Nigel the sheep (1991)

Lucy (eight to twelve)

Playing games (1989) The crash (1989) Sleepover (1989) I am a texta (1989) Randy the rat (1989) The worm (1989) Hazel the bee (1989) When I went for a dip (1989) Having sports at the zoo (1989) The seaweek monster (1989) I went to Nana's house (16 10.89) Last night I did the animals (17.10.89) Secret castle (1990) The cloud person (1990) Batman bug (14.5.91) The ghost (1991) Apple (1991)

Chloe (nine to twelve)

Dexter (Feb 1989) My first day at dog training school (1989) Squeaker (1989)

Yesterday I went to Donna's (13.2.90) One slimy night (1990)On Sunday (29.5.90) I am having four sausage rolls (31 5 90) I chucked up last night (2.6.90) On Sunday I had lunch at Donnas (5.6.90) Last night the school got robbed (24.6.90) I have already thought (25.6.90) Shopping (1990) Spike (1990) Mr man on the moon (1990) I hope tomorrow will be better (1990)The junk car (1991) Haunted House (1991) The worm (1991) The witch (1991) School (1991) Shipwrecked (1991) There was a certain probe (1991)

Margaret (eleven to twelve)

What I don't want to be (1989) What I would like to be (1989) Cement toothpaste (1989) The haunted house (1989) Stop biting your nails (1989) Bored (1989) My holiday in Marnanda (7.10.89-14.10.89) The night the school got robbed (1989) Bushfire (1989) Aliens (1989) The day Jeanette tried to get her L plates (1989) Famous Australian people (1989) My pet alligator (1989) The day I went fishing (1989) The night the school burnt down (1989) When my parents got divorced (1989) Fouling the nest (1989) The sub (1989) Profiles (1989) Hello. Is this the perth dog training school? (1989) The night I saw Santa (1989)

Eve (eleven to twelve)

I saw it all (21.2.89) Grandma's house (6.6.89) Jeanette's first job (17.10.89) Skyscraper (1989) The night the Easter bunny didn't come (1989) Last night I had pasta for tea (10.8.89) Last night my night was wreaked (11.8.89) The Mary Marie (1989) Dame Nellie Melba (1989) Garbage monster (1989) Dyeing love (1989)

Time Summary

Years One to Three of the Research

I visited the school for an hour or more, usually on a Tuesday, when Mr B told me they would be doing story writing. Occasionally I was there at other times, and if I was away at a conference or something I might not visit the school for a couple of months. I also visited the girls and their parents at home, though not very much. Initially, I went to a school council meeting to talk about what I planned to do, but the research phase hasn't really been satisfactorily completed from the parents' point of view. I think they've given up expecting some vague book about their (re-named) daughters to materialize. The girls were very pleased that I took their writing to New York etc. and that I showed it on overheads to people there. This seemed to be enough for them, though I think they'd be pleased if something they could understand came out of it.

Years Two and Three of the Research

I was disappointed that no new girls came to the school, and that with the loss of Eve and Margaret to secondary schools there were no replacements. But as I had set out to study all of the girls attending the school, and I still was, I had to be content. I had half expected Mr B to transfer or be promoted into another school, but I considered myself lucky that he stayed at Ruralsville and that I was able to keep working there. Of course, I could follow up on the work I have already done and try to find the girls in years to come, and that could be interesting, but for what I set out to research I believe I have enough data from my three years of visiting the school.

Years Four and Five of the Research

Apart from one extra visit to the school at the end of year four, and conducting the interviews with the girls (Appendix C), these years have been years of distancing myself. This has allowed me to get on with the business of writing and reading so that this dissertation can take the shapes and the directions it does.

Key Writings

Because I shall be theorizing not individual girls but a schoolgirl culture, I list the key writings without now naming the girls. Although there are other writings sometimes considered in Chapter 4, I found these writing pieces important because they best exemplified the girls' positionings regarding femininity and subjectivity. The writing pieces I do not take up seemed to me either to regard discourses other than these, or to deal with femininity and subjectivity less clearly.

Here I present the key writings mostly in full, but sometimes in part. Where writers have not titled their writing, I have used the first line as a title when it clearly identifies the topic. As with the Appendices '...' indicates that I have omitted some of the text. '**' indicates that the handwriting was unclear. Page numbers beside the titles indicate where my deconstructings of them can be found in Chapter 4. Writing included as Appendix A is supportive to these key writings, and shows some of the writing not now exemplified. The following are the key writings.

THE DAY JEANETTE TRIED TO GET HER L PLATES (page 151, 169, 171, 196, 230, 240)

Mum could you dive me down to the R.T.A?
"O.K." "Lets go."
"Mum now I don't think I want to go"
Don't be a chicken"
I went down the path.
"I would like to get my licence please."
"O.K." "What's your name?"
Jeanette Wooly
"Hop in the car"
How do you I start it?
Don't you know?
"No"
"Turn the key"
Brooom Brooom
"Put your foot on the clutch and put it in first gear"
"Where is that?
Reve it up a bit more
BRAKE BRAKE
B A N G "You Idiot, you made me hit my head"
You told me to hit the brake"
"We'll go out on the road"
"O.K."
"Go out the gate" BANG
"Now look what you have done to the gate. "Stop swerving all over the road."
"I can't help it"
"Lets go back to the R.T.A."
"Well Jeanette you have not passed the standard to get your L plates."
"Try next year when I'm retired and the next person will have to put up with you"
"Can I use your phone to ring my Mum to pick me up."
"Yes"
"Ring Ring"
Mum can you pick me up?
"Why didn't you get your L plates"?
"Well I will tell you in the car."

I GOT MY LICHENEDS (page 15, 151)

I got my lichened. Anthony helped me drive I was a good driver so Anthony said that I was the best driver he had tought people so he gave me my P Plates so he is cool because he gave my my P's my mum gave me a Pink car for me and my boy frind its a wagon its so cool its pink with black and blue its the best car out all the arther cars are dumb thay are yellow and green they are all yuck.

THE DAY I GOT MY LICENCE (page 230)

I am nineteen so I am getting my licence and I'm getting it Today. So off I go to get a car. I got a black limo. Now I have to get my licence I got my licence right away because I was good at driving. Then I went to Donnas house to tell her. She said it was cool. So did I. She said she wanted to get her licence too. So She went to and got it.

APPLE (page 212)

Hello my name is Hollie. I am an apple. I will tell you a story.Once a upon a time I was only a baby blossom. It was fun.Until a moth came along and ate me. So I had to grow again.I was the last baby blossom left, except for a baby blossom called Sleepy. All the other baby blossoms had turned into little apples. When Sleepy and I where little apples the others were ready to pick. Then a big fat monster came. Sleepy was scared. I said "don't worry". They are only people to pick us. But I was wrong. They picked all the other apples. A little girl said "Daddy, can I pick these two apples?". "NO" They are too small. Sleepy said "Why didn't they pick us?" I said "Because we are too small. Sleepy cried until night time. At night we fell off the tree. In the morning a worm called Brett came and took Sleepy and me to his house. He didn't eat us instead he kept us. We were good friends. We had fun together.

THE JUNK CAR (page 235)

*The teacher was talking about how cars worked. I lifted up my desk lid so I could talk to Fiona my best friend. I whispered as quite as I could Lets go down to the Junk yard and built our own" "What" said Fiona out loud. "Fiona was that you talking said Mr Blake in his sternest voice. "Yes Sir" Fiona mumbled, "Go stand by the door outside" Mr Blake said. Fiona went outside by the door. Mr Blake continued with the lesson Five minutes later I asked "Mr Blake can I please go to the toilet "you can't but you may next go to the toilet at Break" answered Mr Blake "Yes Sir" I replied as I walked quickly for the door. I open the door a shut in fast behind me. "What are you doing here Cris, How'd ya **** out" said Fiona looking amazed "I said I needn't to go to the toilet," "You little sneak, by the way what were you talking about inside" "I was talking about making our own car from the junkyard" "That an excellent idea" I better get back into the room.Just as I walked inside the bell rang. Everyone got out of their desks and rushed for the door. I was nearly knocked over. I was left standing there. Mr Blake turned from chalkboard and spoke "You go tell Fiona she may go to break""Yes Sir" I replied. I ran out the door ignoring Mr Blake who was saying next time don't run out of the class. ***The tip wasn't that far away from the school so it only took about ten minutes to get there. When we got through the fence I said "**It didn't take long to find what we wanted. Fiona founda motor and a weird look remote control. I found this long metal have tube, four wheels and two old seats. We fitted A propeller on the engine and connected*

THE GOST HOUSE (page 175, 183)

One day Lucy and I Where bord we went outside a Gost house was there So we went inside it was goiyt it was emty we saw a Gost and then we ran there was no way out so we just ran and ran we where going in sogls we Just ran and ran I said to Sojc there is no way to outside she said I no we fell in a trap we found a pasig it was like a hall way, we we threw it. it was dake and it was loge we where back from when we sarte from this time we went the difrnt way so we wod no go in the trap we did not see the Gost it got darck we jast went wocking it was sill dack and qiyt I said to Lucy I no there is a Gost haer woching us There it is we said together this time we chast the Gost it was not a Gost it was a person he prest a buttn we went in to a hall a man put us in a cach he did't tack the key when he was gon we opend it and went out we went into a room Lucy said look haer there was a bottl it said machik mederson we took it with us I said we wont to go home the machik mederson will do it we said together but it did't tack us home I said to Lucy it cood mack the door so we can go home

IA (page 235, 240)

Mr B is a good teacher.

THE SAVAGE SALAD (page 180)

"Not salad again Mum" I moaned
"Eat it up Lisa or you'll have no tea".
I picked the smallest piece of carrot and it bit me
"Ouch! That piece of carrot bit me
"Don't tell jokes Lisa" dad said in a stern voice as he took the biggest tomato he could find. He munched and munched.
"The best tomato I've ever tasted honey" dad said
"Lisa seeing you have lied you gets no more pocket money for the rest of the year".
"Dad, but its only January the first - 364 days to go".
"That not fair" said something.
"Lisa don't answer back"
"I didnt"
Out of the salad came a carrot. He looked like this. He said "Give Lisa back her pocket money" "OK said Dad
Then the carrot ran away. Since then we have never eaten salad again. Wonder why?

PROFILES (page 219)

Name Margaret Williams
Address R.M.B. 4187 RURALSVILLE 3282
Age 14 Date of Birth 5/9/77
Likes Music, cows, icecream, textiles and Social Studies, Motorbikes
Dislikes Horses, boys, fried eggs, woodwork and electrical.
Height 5 foot 7 inchs
Weight 9 stone 4 pound.
eye colour grey, birth mark in right eye
hair " brown
favorite animals Cows and dogs.
Occupation Student
future Occupation Textiles or Social Sudies teacher and maybe a History/Geog. teacher.
School Klide Secondary College Murnalong
Ambishion to bungi jump off a bridge or parashut out of a plane

DYEING LOVE by Eve Grant (page 181, 185, 186, 241)

"There Mike is again" murmed Kate, (thats me)" I know isnt he cute" said FIONA.He's looking this way turn away act normal they both whispered.

He's looking at Andrea again, he always looks at her, did you see him looking at her all through science class this morning. Whats so special about her. She's just as pretty as us. Come on lets go outside now O.K. I've finished. What do you want to do? talk I spose. lets compare each other O.K. Andrea first: brown straight hair, brown eyes, Average height ears pierced, twice.
You now
Kate: black curley hair, green eyes, Avarage height, ears pierced, twice.
FIONA: blond hair (straight) blue eyes, avarage height, ears pierced twice
...We went down there and there was nobody there so we deicied to go down to the oval and talk we just got there and a football came straight for us I caught it and someone grabbed me from behind and tackled the ball off me as I got free. I turned around and there was Mike ... we just sat there saying nothing till the bell rang. We walked up to English classes and our teacher gave us a diary book and told us we could write anything we like in it. We have no worry's it is totally private he'll only flick through it to see we are writing in it. The rest of shool was plain boring. When I got home I got five prank calls from someone misterous. It was someone from school I think when I picked up the phone and said hello I just got hung up on. It was about 12.00pm when mum got home she was drunk. Ever since dad walked out mum after work just drinks herself silly and then comes home sick. I put her to bed and went to bed myself...I turned around there was Mike smiling as always I was very susprised. Hi I said, Hi he said I turned back around he said he was the one ringing me he didn't have the guts to talk to me. We got up started walking back to the basketball court as soon as we got there Andrea ran up to Mike and Mike flung his arms around her, and I walked over to FIONA Mike and Andrea walked off together I was confused I thought Well he rang me I don't know why but he came up to the oval to get me I wonder why but it was plain to me and FIONA he was in love with Andrea.
4 years later ...Me and FIONA are still friends I'm a waitress part time and I go to an acting school the rest of the time. FIONA well she's a full time cook at the resturant I wait at. Andrea and Mike have bought a flat and now are living together. Me and FIONA bought a house, yes our first house it was about a month ago. its number 72 and it's painted white. It has about 5 trees out front Jassmen and ivy are intwined and weaved all along the fence. tonight we are having a home warming party. and I have just gone shopping for the third time. FIONA is in the kitchen cooking...then the doorbell rang FIONA and I both started screaming it shouldn't be another four hours till people started turning up we wernt dressed propaly yet and and we wern't ready anyway OPEN UP GIRLS we heard Andrea say coming I opened the door and Andrea was crying come in I said she sobbed out thankyou.
Whats wrong?
we had a fight she sobbed again.
What about?
another girl
Oh I said
hear you are grab a tissue and you can help us. thankyou she sobbed. FIONA and Andrea finished the cooking while I had a shower and got ready then they had a shower and got ready while I put ballons up, decorated and tidyed. soon it was nearly time. The doorbell rang and there was Mike.
Andrea and Mike went into the bedroom and came out smiling.
We had about 50 guests turn up and we only invited 30. I spose people brought people FIONA said.

THE CRASH (page 211)

Hi I am a possum. I just survived a crash. I will tell you about it. One day I swung over to my friend's house on the flying possum. Just when I got there she said "I was just coming over." So we went back to my house. Mum was crying. I asked her "What is the matter?" She said The .....Crash. The tree fell down
PS We had to live with my friend

THE WORM (page 192, 193)

Once there was a king called Straimme. He had two sons. There names were Brett and Anthony. When they were old enough to marry, the king said "Fire an arrow, were it lands your wife will live." Brett and Anthony did what they were told. Anthonys arrow landed in an apple. Bretts arrow landed in a spiders webb. Anthony cut the apple open, out crawled a worm. Anthony took it back to palace. When Brett took the arrow out of the web a spider scrated out his eye. Anthony got married to the worm that night. At the feast the worm ate to much and it went up in smoke. The beautiful princess Donna emerged from the smoke. Donna and Anthony had 10 kids. There names were Rodney, Thomas, Nick, Greg, Leah, Sophie, Samatha Kate and Mary.

WHAT I DON'T WANT TO BE (page 196)

I don't want to be a police lady.
Because I could get shot and killed.
I would have to go though too much training. I could go though all that trainig. and get killed. Sometimes you have to shoot people your self with none to help you. I could get killed in the middle of the night. Yuk I can't think about it.

WHAT I WANT TO BE (page 196)

I would like to be a Mum because I could smack my kids when they are bad, But I would not like to change the nappies when they are babies.

STOP BITING YOUR NAILS (page 19, 148, 153)

"Stop biting your nails."
"Sorry Mum."
"Stop biting your nails"
"I will not do it again."
I must think of somthing. She thought for ages then I got it.
If I get some steel I can make some metal nails and wire them so when she goes to bite her nails she will get a shock. The Mother placed the metal nails on the fingers.
"Och".
"Mum my nails are giving me shocks."
Serves you right.
A few weeks later. "Mum my nails have grown
"Good"
Now don't bite your nails or I will put the shocking steel finger nails on your fingers.

FAMOUS AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE (page 216)

*Captain John Macarthur has been called the father of the wool industry in Australia. He brought the first Spanish Merino sheep to Australia.
Later he brought some other Merino sheep from England. John wanted to produce a fine quality wool to sell to other countries. He was successful and in 1807 the first Australia wool was sold to England.
Sir Douglas Mawson was one of the first Antartic explorers. He set up a number of bases which helped to explore the ice regions, forcast weather and set up radio contact. Mawson was luky to survive on expedition mishap. He survived 20 days of very cold conditions before reaching his base.*

THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA (page 218, 219)

It was the 24th of December. It was hot and I couldn't get to sleep. I heard someone in the lounge room I crept down to see who it was. I opened the sliding door so quiet, no'one could hear and peeped around the corner. It was a bit dark so I couldn't see. I got a torch and put my hand over it so there would not be too much light. I shined it on this person. This person wore an all red suit and black boots and as I shined it up I saw who it was. It was Santa. He suddenly saw me looking at him. He started to laugh sofly. He said "Come here". So I walked over to him. I sat on his knee and I rubbed my face on his beard. It tickled. He got me and took me into my room, put me in bed and gave me a nice big kiss. He told me it was a special kiss and I would not wake up until the morning and then he clicked his fingers and I was asleep. In the morning Mum woke me up at 10.00am because I slept in. When I tried to tell Mum I saw Santa she laughed and told me to look at my presents. I sould have known no'one would believe me so next time I see Santa I won't tell anyone.

JEANETTES FIRST JOB (computer print-out in capital letters) (page 170)

*THIS STORY IS A CONTUITATION OF MARGARET'S STORY THE DAY
JEANETTE TRIED TO GET HER L PLATES...............
IN MARGARET'S STORY JEANETT HAD A GO AT GETTING HER L PLATES BUT DIDNT SUCEED.......................................
SHE HAS HAD 8 GOES SINCE THEN AND FINALLY GOT HER L PLATES. NOW IT IS TIME TO GET A JOB SHE SAID".MUM WHERES THE PAPER"?"IN THE FIRE""MUM IV'E TOLD YOU NOT TO PUT IT IN THE FIRE UNTIL I'VE READ IT"," BUT YOU NEVER READ IT JEANETT DARLING AND I COULDNT SEE YOU STARTING NOW",WHY NOT YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE".DARLING I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU START PAYING ME BOARD EVERY WEEK","ALRIGHT,YOU CAN PAY ME $10.00 A WEEK INSTEAD OF $12.00 A WEEK","O.K. LOVE I'M GOING TO BED NOW GOODNIGHT"
"GOODNIGHT".
"MORNING MUM""MORNING JEANETTE LOVE" "WHERS THE PAPER?"
"OH"*

THE MARY MARIE (page 217)

The Mary Marie well into the Bloop ocean and sailing well. Me, Lord Abrel Cape the XII and my wife Lady Sarah Geniveve Cape. We are in the "fur" business and are off to Germany to sell our finest furs. We should make a PACKET.

The Mary Marie would be sure to get us to Germany if any ship could. It was garatead.
BANG we hit a rock. We started to go down. People were jumping off the side the ship. I rushed too Sarah. "Help me grab the furs" I said. Sarah and I grabed as many as we could and rushed to where they were loading women and children. We went over to a boat and started lifting children out and putting furs in then we lowered the boat and jumped in few I thought our stock of best furs would have been ruined ARRRP the boat had a hole in it Lady Sarah started screaming we both jumped out of the boat ARRRP we can't swim........

KANGAROO (page 155, 156)

I am a kangaroo
I bounce and I jump
I eat grass.
(It's cute)

DAME NELLIE MELBA (page 161)

Dame Nellie Melba was born Helen Porter Mitchell on 19 May 1861 in Richmond, Melbourne. Nellie loved music as a child and used to climb under the grand piano and listen to her mother play.
Helen married Charles Armstrong in Brisbane in 1882 and in 1884 she started taking singing lessons. Nellie was not happy in her marriage & could not set aside her ambition to become agreat singer.
In 1886, with her baby son, she sailed for England. She had many disappointments but showed great courage and independence. She went to Paris and commenced lessons under Madame Marchesi who said "At last I have found a star" Melba first appeared in Europe in the operra Rigoletto at Brussels on 13 Oct. 1887 and was immediately acclaimed a great singer. She became the best known and most highly paid woman in the world. She had become a legend in her own lifetime.

MUM SAID TO PACK MY BAGS (page 240)

Mum said to pack my bags she told me what to put in my bags I will tell you what I put in my bags. A good T-Shirt. My jimboots.
My Toys.

WHAT I DON'T WHAT TO BE (page 196)

A doctor. because you see every One's blood and gizzards and same time you have to put stiches in peoples head. The blood comes out of our head and some peoples scream.

NIGEL THE SHEEP (page 236)

Nigel the sheep butted Brett and Chloe, Lucy, Anthony and I broke a branch. We squashed Nigel and he died because he got crippled. We laughed because we didn't own the sheep. We did not get blamed because they did not see us at all. We ate Nigel because he was no use. He would just go to the knackery. We had a good time eating him and we made a sheepy. Chloe slept with the sheepy and that was funny, because she was 13 years old.

SIX SMELLY FAT FEET (page 236)

Big fat feet
fat
big fat feet
see how FEET they smell
see how they smell
I cut them off with a big sharp knife

MY FIRST DAY AT DOG TRAINING SCHOOL (page 220)

I was the best dog at Training and I wun a metal and tropy and evey one was claping and I was backing and I was the happy's dog out off all and I was prald of all and when I went home I stuch my nose out and all the aver dog weer saed and the oner's wer saed too. The oner's of me wer prald and the oner's of me wer prald too Chloe oner's was the wier too and Chloe the dog was prald too and Chloe mate backing to her and Chloe nill had puppy's because she had a boy dog

THE CLOUD PERSON (page 220)

One day Pete decided to go to bed because she was tried.
So she did. When she was asleep she had a dream.
Suddenly the bed flew off in the sky, up to the clouds.
Then the bed dropped her. Pete bounced and bounced.
Then a little man came. Pete thought he looked funny.
This is what he looked like.
For days Pete liked it there, but some days she began to miss her family.
The cloud person gave Pete everything. One day Pete said to the cloud person
"Its is time for me to go home".
So the cloud person gave her a tyre.
When ever you need anything get the tyre and you will float up.

SLUMBER PARTY (computer printout) (page 140)

Tonight I'm haveing a Slumber Party And Donna, Chloe and Lucy are comeing and we are going to the beach at 6:00 to 8:00 Tonight is the night Chloe came firsed then Lucy came then Donna then we went to the Beach I saw a shark and it aet someone and he die. Then we went back home and went to bed. In the morning we went to the Beach at 8:00 to 12:00

SLUMBER PARTY (earlier handwritten draft) (page 145, 180)

Tonight Im having a SLUMBER PARTY. And Donna, Chloe and Lucy are coming we are going to the beach from 6.00 to 8.00. Tonight is the night. Chloe came first. Then Lucy came. Then Donna. Then we went to the beach. I saw a shark and it ate someone and he died. Then we went back home and went to bed. In the morning we went to the beach from 8.00 to 12.00. Then everyone went home. In a few days it was Donnas birthday and I went and Chloe and Lucy too. Donna had an ice cream cake. We went to bed. Donna went straight to sleep and we went to eat all the food in the kitchen. Then we went to bed. In the morning we woke up early. Donna was still asleep. She was snoring so we woke her up. Then we went in the pool. We got out and make a cake. It was fun. We ate it. After that we went on the motor boke. Then we went to the Philippines and the plane nearly crashed. We went to a disco and got *drunk. The next day I had a hangover. After that we went to get something to eat for breakfast. I had pancakes. We then went on a bus to a different place. It took us 10 hours to get there. Then we wnt to a bar to get a drink and then we went to a disco.*

THE DAY I GOT A CAR (page 154)

They day I Got A CAR. It was a White CAR.
The man who tecked me name was Brad he was a good man and Anthony his brother was a good Boy too. But Anthony Got a car and smashed it up it was a white and it was my Car and I was Cross with Anthony Brad brother was good anough to Give me a red Car but i sold it for a white car and it was the zacley the samm as my first Car it was a wagein and it was a sporty Car Wagein and it was a sporty car. I pood a monoy in my wagein.
The End

A BUTAFDLDAY IT WAS (page 206)

a Butafdlday it was But When it was Lunshtime there was a Big sdrm MuM tolde Me Not to go and get the Wood. And I side I haf to get the Wood MuM or you Will get cold.

Key Events

For my analysis, the following are key events at the school. Selections are based on understandings of feminist discourses discussed throughout Chapters 1, 2 and 3. I looked for data segments which could potentially inform research questions regarding links between femininity, subjectivity and language. The events are listed in chronological order, and are intended also to give an understanding of other events to be considered in Chapter 4. Here is an introductory description to each event, together with a quotation from the Chronology. Page numbers refer to places where Chapter 4 deconstructs from the events described. Appendices will not repeat the data but supply some supporting material in the form of additional journal entries or extensions to the extracts quoted now.

BESIDE THE BIKE SHEDS 11.4.89 (page 169)

(Here Eve and Margaret discuss what they will write. They consider a number of topics, but the writing that eventually comes from the talk is 'The day Jeanette tried to get her L Plates'. Later I talk with Kylie inside the school.)

I go outside, as all the grades three to sixes have left the classroom with their paper, clipboards and pens or pencils. I follow the noise to find the children. All the boys are standing under a tree. Then, like predators, they're on the move. Not fixed, certainly not writing or constructing the beginnings of writing. I see the girls sitting together on the ground, their backs against the corrugated iron bike shed, their clipboards leaning on their knees.

Margaret: (loudly, to Eve) NO. "O" "R". (She's fixing up Eve's spelling)
Eve: (to Margaret, they seem to be looking for suitable stories to write about) "The day Mrs B backed into the bike shed". (making loud screech and crash noises, then continues with her imagined story) "And Mr B said, 'That's comming out of her Expo money.'"

Margaret: (also imagining a story) "The day Natasha got her P plates and ran over the dog". (they both laugh) (Donna runs off)
Lucy: Donna's gone. Donna's ran off.
Eve: I know. She doesn't like it.
Donna: (long and drawn out) Eve, I'm tellin' Mr B on you. (Eve's taken the refills out of her multi-coloured biro.)

Kylie: (later, and inside the classroom, to me) I wanna draw a picture of your hand. (I've been reading aloud her book of writing as scribed for her by Mr B. She's a bit bored by it.)
Me: OK
Kylie: You stay there. (She comes back and draws around my hand on a piece of scrap paper. It's the first time today that one of the girls has initiated contact with me.)
Natasha: (sitting opposite) Don't draw on her hand.
Me: It doesn't matter. It'll come off. (Kylie completes her outline and then adds her version of my fingernails and my Grandmother's ring.)

NOT WRITING 9.5.89 (page 159, 170, 197)

(Here the girls' and boys' stories are read aloud to the school. Today Mr B reads Margaret's story about 'The day Jeanette tried to get her L plates'. Later the younger girls are sitting together and chatting. Many things happen besides writing. Everyday classroom events include the trivial.)

1.30 pm. As I arrive Mr B has the whole school facing him and in their desks. Apart from Margaret, who's beside him looking awkward.

Mr B (to me) Does this story meet with your approval? (Margaret seems about to read to the school her story, "The Day Jeanette Tried To Get Her L Plates.")
Me: Oh, I don't know about that.

Then he reads aloud Margaret's story. All the kids had listened avidly to our dialogue, though no-one asked me what I meant and I'd been deliberately evasive. They all look round at me and grin as Mr B reads. I've sat myself behind them all, but facing Mr B. The next story writer to be dealt with is Shane. He reads his story aloud himself.

Shane: (reading aloud) "then Jane and all the girls fainted ... Jane and the girls got taken to Ruralsville Primary School to recover from the shock."

2.00 pm. Natasha, Jane and Kylie are all sitting down at their table. They appear to be writing, though Natasha and Jane chit chat to each other. Jane's at the end of the table so that Natasha and Kylie are opposite each other. Kylie is silent and straight-backed, the dilligent worker. Her hair is up in a plaited top-knot today, with a clip and a red bow.
2.05 pm. They're still working.
2.06 pm. Now they leave off the pencil work to see who can say, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can" the fastest.
2.08 pm. Back to the silent work.
Kylie: (to herself) Now what colour will I do it?
2.10 pm. Jane moves to continue her writing at her desk.
Justin and another boy begin to sing "We are the Brady Bunch".

Mr B: Justin (they stop)
Justin: (loudly) Jane. Mr B, Jane's....

Mr B looks up and Jane stops harrassing him. She'd stood up beside him but I missed what she was doing. Natasha and Kylie take their work over to Mr B. He writes down what Natasha says, scribing for her. Natasha reads it back slowly and word by word.

Natasha: (reading) "I..think..you..like..me.."
Mr B: OK, now you can get yourself some lined paper that's the same as what's in your book.
Natasha: Can I do it in texta?
Mr B: Oooh. Well, you'll have to do it very, very carefully.
(she begins to copy out Mr B's words.)
2.15 pm. Mr B goes outside, muttering to himself, "Oh dear".

Natasha: (calling out as soon as he has gone) Hey Luke, look what I'm doin'.
Mr B comes back and he and I have a bit of a talk. About sick leave for rural teachers. Says he's very tired. His own children have been waking him up at five o'clock in the morning.

Kylie wants us to look at her drawing. Mr B says, "Not now. I'm talking to Jeanette. When we finish talking, I say, "Kylie, can I have look at your drawing?" And she shows me.

Me: Kylie, are you doing any writing yet?
Kylie: Nup
Me: Why not?
Kylie: 'Cos Mr B writes what I want.
Me: When do you think you'll be doing your own writing?
Kylie: Oh. Mr B, he writes it down.
Later I notice she's drawing a writing on her arm again. With texta.

NOTE WRITING 16.5.89 (page 163)

(Here Brett writes a note to Donna as Mr B reads a story aloud to the school. I am co-opted to help with the writing. Eve says the girls never write notes, they just get them.)

1.25 pm and Mr B is reading aloud to the school from some book about witches.

Mr B: (reading) "It was the smell of witches. It reminded me of the smell outside the men's lavatories."
(1.30 pm. Brett interrupts me as I write this.)
Brett: (politely and quietly beside me as Mr B reads aloud the witch story) Excuse me. How do you spell "reckon"?
Me: What?
Brett: How do you spell "reckon"? (I see now that he's got a small jotter with "Dear Donna, I love you because I r..." written on it.)
Me: I'll write it down for you. (He has no worries about passing me his jotter. I expect him to want to conceal his writing. I go to write it upside down to preserve his privacy.)
Brett: No, here. (turns the jotter right way up) It'll save me copying it out. (though I was trying to put into practice the idea that we learn to spell by looking. Oh well. I write "reckon" and he shows it to the three boys sitting near him. Four girls sit in front of them. Donna's

right in the front row of the four desks. I wait to see what he does with the note. He spends a long time decorating it with textas. Adds, "you look good. Do you like me." No question mark.)

Me: Brett, how old are you?
Brett: Nine.
Me: Can I have photocopy of your note? (Before he can answer Eve and Margaret turn instantly around and leap to their feet)
Eve and Margaret together: I'll do it.

Finally, after a slight interruption to Mr B's reading of the witch story, and much sniggering from the older boys, Brett makes a photocopy of his note. He's not sure whether to be blasé or not. Later Eve gives me a photocopy of a similar note she has in her desk. On the condition that I don't show it to Mr B as it has a swear word in it.
Me: Can I show it to some people you don't know?
Eve: Well all right.
Me: Do you girls write notes like this?
Eve: Oh no. We just get them.

A CLAPPING RHYME OUTSIDE AT PLAYTIME 30.5.89 (page 215)
(Here Eve and Margaret show me a clapping rhyme.)

Eight boys playing cricket. The ninth boy watching from the sand pit. There's a tenth boy somewhere else. This school has ten boys and eight girls. I talk with Mr B. Eve and Margaret interrupt with:

Eve: Jeanette, do you know this? (they proceed to present a hand-clapping rhyme in the schoolroom at lunch-time.)

Afterwards we talk a bit about how old the rhymes are. They ask me me if I know one they don't know. I say yes, my Grandmother taught it to me so it's pretty old, but it's awfully racist.
I demonstrate "Mary Mack dressed in black/ Silver buttons down her back." They practice my clapping pattern, which is quite different from theirs.

At recess-time Eve and Margaret take me outside so I can write down their clapping rhyme. Demonstration. Lucy and Donna set up their own demonstraton team nearby. All other girls except Jane crowd around. Boys play cricket. Rhyme is:
" Under the bamboo
Under the sea
True love for you my darling
True love for me cha cha cha
When we get married
We'll have a family cha cha cha
Boy for you (point)
Girl for me (point)
Tra la la la la la la. Sexy."

Jane: (2.35 pm and almost the end of recess) Jeanette, I've finished: (her writing)

GETTING INFORMATION FOR A SCHOOL PROJECT 20.6.89 (page 216)
(Here Eve decides who to research for her school project on famous Australians.)

Eve's project, "Famous Australians", is growing. She tells me Mr B started it off with Sir Douglas Mawson. She's added Dame Nellie Melba, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and Pru Acton. Now she's hunting for someone else. Her source of information is a book called "One Thousand Famous Australians."

Eve: I didn't get Pru Acton out of there though.
Me: Where did you get her?
Eve: From this fashion magazine. The people I choose, I'd rather have something interesting about them. Otherwise it's a bit boring. (pause) My next one's going to be Errol Flynn.
Me: Why?
Eve: Because he's an actor, and that's what I want to be. (pause, looking at book) Oh no, I can't have him.
Me: Why not?
Eve: Because he's not an Australian. (We peer at the fine print in "One Thousand Famous Australians".) Oh yes, he's born in Hobart. Phew.

THE SCHOOL CAMP 7.11.89 (page 184, 199)

(Here are various descriptions of what can be seen happening on the video Mr B made on the school camp.)

4. *Jane is pushing the barrel by herself, copying the other girls'behaviour.*
She's delighted. She stands on the barrel, walking it forwards.

7. *Eve sits by herself on the railing. Miss Y and the mother are talking beside the barbecue. Margaret is with them, listening. She is their height.*

8. *Kylie, Chloe and Donna are upside down on the parallel bars.*

9. *Kylie is at the top of the slide, a big boy close beside her. Big boy: (impatiently) Come on. He follows her all the way down to the bottom, his feet pushing hard at her sides. She puts up with it, but as she walks away from the bottom of the slide she picks her nose and eats it.*

10. *Donna and Lucy are carrying Kylie by the arms and feet. They're in a play they've made up. Donna drops Kylie by mistake. A hard fall and the audience of children laughs. Kylie ignores both the laughter and the fall, though she must be doubly hurt. In the play she seems to be a cute little kitten. She always crawls.*

11. *Mr B: Out of the way please (He pushes Kylie gently away from the camera. A child's hand comes out and pushes her hard.) Children, together: Kylie. Kylie.*
Mr B: Kylie, hop out of the way please sweetie.

12. *Still at the camp, the children are putting on a concert. The boys' item is first. There are four of them. It's mostly mime. They use scripts, a ball, cushions on the floor. And chairs. It seems to be called "You'll get a medal." The girls' item is basically Eve and Margaret with the others added in. At one stage Margaret kisses Eve on the cheek, in such a matter of fact way that it seems perfectly OK. The audience accepts it as theatre. The comedy later seems to be about fat people with cushions stuffed up their T-shirts. Some clever timing. At the finish the girls sing together a song they have written.*

17. *Playing outside at the Adventure Playground, on the Camp. Beside the river, boys and girls together. The mother and Miss Y sit watching nearby. Mr B controls the camera. Eve and Kylie on the flying fox. Margaret on the swing. Chloe climbs very high. So does Kylie.*

18. *The girls are chanting, an age-old rhyme. I can't decode it.*

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE GIRLS AND TALK ABOUT WRITING 7.12.89 (page 184)

(Here I describe what everyone is doing during writing time and what the girls are wearing. Eve, Miss Y and I talk about Eve's story 'Dyeing Love'.)

Aaron and Matthew are at the computer next to me. Donna and Luke are at the new computer. They've got three terminals now. Miss Y comes over and fixes up what their typos. "The day I went to school I met..." Lucy is rewriting "The day Natasha was going for her L-plates." Jane is writing "The Gost House." But she is very busy writing on her rubber actually. Chloe is writing "The Cat." It looks like a first draft. Margaret is first-drafting "It was the 24th Dec." She tells me she's thinking about what to do. Says she's just finished "The Divorced One." Eve is continuing "Dyeing Love." She walks across the room and talks to Miss Y. I see that Eve is the taller of the two. Today's clothes:

Margaret: mauve and white fine stripe pedal pushers. She strolls across to help Donna at the computer. Donna hasn't asked for help. She just gets it. Also wears mauve windcheater with the sleeves pushed up. Sneakers and sox.

Donna: Blue T-shirt. Pink and white patterned loose cotton trousers.

Lucy: Pale pink cords, pink sox pushed down, navy blue leather buckle shoes, white T-shirt with Happy Birthday Australia 1988 written on it beside pictures of balloons.

Jane: Blue Hopper jeans rolled up at the bottoms, grey-green fashion T-shirt, white gym boots.

Chloe: Long tight purple shorts, matching green and purple loose top, sneakers with white sox.

Eve: Very big black T-shirt with psychadelic butterfly and leaf pattern all over the front, Ken Done patterned pants, black T-bar Harrison leather school shoes. She talks to me about what she is writing:

Eve: (to me) I had it all worked out when I started, but now I haven't got a thing worked out.

Me: Yeah, well that often happens with writing.

Eve: Like he might not be going to die at the end now. But then if he doesn't, then I'll have to change the title.

Me: That doesn't matter.

Eve: (later, standing behind Miss Y again. I can't hear what they're saying. Walks back to me.) You know I called my story "Dying Love". Well Miss Y said to call it that.

Miss Y: (loudly, from across the room, to me) I thought she meant LOVE was going to die. (Eve, Miss Y and I laugh.)

Eve: But I meant HE would. (It's a joke we share. To me, she says, soto voce) I was going to have Kate get pregnant and then have him die before it got born. (sharply) What's the matter? You're not laughing. Miss Y thought it was very funny.

Me: (seriously) Well sometimes it happens. (Eve walks away and goes back to her writing.)

KYLIE WRITES ABOUT LIPSTICK 5.3.90 (page 236)

(Here the four youngest children's writing is displayed in the classroom. Clumsily, I try to find out what prompted Kylie's. Some differences between girls and boys are clear. I am uneasy with Chloe. Everyday classroom interactions.)

There's an alternative entrance ramp to the main building, I see. And a sports shed with the stench of toilets between them.

Girls' toilets: 1 sit down toilet, 1 wash basin, a cobweb at the level of my head. I break the cobweb walking in. Boys' toilets: 1 sit down, 1 wash basin, 1 urinal. The latter is where the stench comes from.

I keep clear of Chloe. She laughed at me last time I arrived. She keeps away from me too. Now she's sitting beside Lucy and they're talking. Lucy leans back on her chair, away from the computer. Chloe's got a clipboard. She's doodling with a biro. They wear black netball pants as brief as underwear. Jane's busy at her desk decorating a story with green texta. Kylie's leaning on the small table watching Mr B writing at David's dictation. He's a Prep. This year there are five girls and eight boys at this school. Kylie comes up to me and without conversation reads aloud her writing, pointing to the words. "I like to play at the ... beach." The Prep and Grade 1 writing and drawing is pegged up high, hanging down from the ceiling like washing on a clothes line. Each piece is a self description named by its writer.

"David
brown eyes
brown eyes
I live in Ruralsville"

"Kylie
blue eyes
blond hair
I wear lipstick
I live at Ruralsville"

"Troy
blue eyes
blond hair
I like shopping.
I live in Ruralsville
legs
tummy"

"Darren
black hair
mouth
brown eyes
face"

Me: (to Kylie, about her writing above) Did you really wear lipstick?
Kylie: Yes I did.
Me: Did you wear lipstick that day?
Kylie: Oh, I don't wear lipstick to school. Sometimes at home I do.
Me: What did you write it for?
Kylie: I don't know.

Mr B leaves the Preps and goes to help Anthony at the computer. Chloe walks over to watch, carrying her clipboard. Donna's swinging back on her chair. She's typed a line and a half now. It's 2.25 pm. Jane's showing Aaron and Luke what she's written. "Hey diddle diddle, Kylie had a fiddle." It's a chalkboard exercise. Kylie's writing on each hand with texta. I'm sitting in Chloe's seat next to Jane. I'm missing Margaret and

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Eve who go to secondary school now. David talks Donna into helping him play games on the computer terminal at playtime. She's eating an apple while she instructs him. Chloe comes over and helps him too.

PLAY OUTSIDE AND WRITING INSIDE 22.10.90 (page 211)

(Here is some talking and positioning as the girls write in the classroom. At playtime the action changes quickly.)

Kylie's big hand-writing in pencil is on very large paper. She gets up to borrow a crayon from Troy. Mr B raises his voice to say, "Are you right Kylie? What have you got to finish now? Just your pictures?" Kylie says nothing. She knows the school rules. She chews the yellow cardboard cutout with the name of her writing on it: "My Dream".

Chloe's blowing kisses to the two boys her age in the front seat. She's left her desk and her writing and is standing in front of them. Lucy's lying on her back on the newly carpeted floor under their desk. She's putting her spilled textas and pencils back in their box. Very slowly. Donna, at the computer keyboard, is writing "Super F was a girl."

Chloe: (walking up to Justin's computer.) Hey Justin, I'll tell you what. You're making a mistake. (She leans over and presses one of the keys on his keyboard. Lucy's writing "The Crash". Chloe's writing "Cameo the Cockroach").
Lucy: Aaron can I use your name in my writing please?
Aaron: No.

Jane's copying out "Super Donna." Kylie's working on "My Dream." It seems to be Mr B's topic. She's written, "I can see a boy named Shane. I can see a boy named Jimmy." Playtime begins, and Jane goes across the room to Lucy and Chloe.

Mr B: Jane what have you been doing? All right. You can go to play.
Chloe: My B can I please go to play?
Mr B: Yes. (She runs outside.)
Kylie: (to me) Can you ask Mr B if I can please use the thing? (she doesn't know what to call the little electronic gadget for playing games on. Neither do I.)
Donna: Mr B how do you save this?

Outside, Kylie's sitting next to me on the step. She's playing the electronic game with David. With biro and scribble pad. Donna's kicking a football to a group of three boys. Chloe and Donna are wrestling on the grass. Jane's high up on the climbing bars by herself. Chloe gets the football.

Chloe: (to Donna, very loudly) You do not use fingernails. (Mr B rings the shrill brass hand bell. They all line up noisily. In a line facing him.)

MY WRITING AND THEIRS 10.12.90 (page 213)

(Here Donna, Chloe and Lucy read what I am writing and Aaron asks me a question. Aaron has some problems with Lucy and Donna.)

Donna and Chloe and Lucy start to read my writing as I scrawl out bits of classroom dialogue. I read aloud to them the bits they can't decipher.

Chloe: (to Lucy as they go back to their seats) Who'd want a job like that? Where you have to write all the time?

Me: (defensively) I don't do it all the time. And anyway, you can make a lot of money out of writing.

Chloe: (coming over to me again) You can make more money out of being a vet or a horse breeder.

Me: Mmm. You have to study maths and science to be a vet, and I didn't. How about you?

Chloe: Yeah. I'm going to.

Jane: (reading my writing over my shoulder) Is that short for Chloe?

Me: Yes.

Jane: Is it Chinese writing?

Me: No, it's just my own very fast scribble. (Jane is writing "Rotton Apples on Toast")

Lucy: (loudly) Who's got a rubber? (Aaron gets up and gives her one. She uses it and gives it back to him. No words. Everyone in the schoolroom is constantly busy. They write, read, talk, move with seemingly choreographed ease.)

Kylie is writing "The Night I Helped Santa". Lucy, "My Place in Spring". Lucy gets up and helps herself to the rubber in Aaron's desk.

Aaron: (to Lucy) Only Luke's allowed in my desk. (pause) I'll kiss ya. (Lucy laughs and makes off with the rubber. Uses it and returns it. Then goes to sharpen a pencil at the bin at the front. Aaron goes and sharpens his pencil too. Jane goes over to Brett at the computer and reads what he is writing.) Play time and I am talking to Mr B. Aaron and Donna rush inside, red faced and puffing. Aaron is a whole head taller than Donna.

Aaron: (loudly) Mr B, she kicked our ball away.

Donna: He wouldn't let me play.

Mr B: Sit in your seats and we'll talk about it in a minute. (They do, sullenly.)

Aaron: (much later, out of the blue, during school time, walking up to where I'm writing.) Is your study about girls because you're a girl?

Me: Yes. You're right.

Aaron: Oh. (walking away)

DEFYING THE RULES 11.2.91 (page 203)
(Here Lucy and Chloe throw vegetables on the shelter shed roof. I notice the signatures up under the eaves.)

I go outside to see if I can find Lucy, Chloe and Jane. I hear them down by the school gate where the flowers are. I keep away, choosing instead to study the vegetable garden. The three of them leave off their writing and talking down by the gate and run over to me. They start talking animatedly about the veggies they've got to ready to eat. Donna and Lucy climb the little fence, bypassing the gate into the school's vegetable patch. We talk about the sweetcorn, the lettuces, the carrots and a non-productive tomato plant amongst others more successful. Chloe picks an under-ripe sweetcorn cob and eats a bit. Spits the rest on the ground. Also picks a sun-ripened tomato.

Lucy: Let's chuck it at Mr B.

Chloe: Nah. Let's chuck it on the roof.

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She does. And it makes a substantial plopping sound as it lands on the corrugated iron of the shelter shed. It is now that I notice the dusty top of the shelter shed walls. Way up high just under the drain pipe is a whole wall-width of names. Handwritten by the fingers of the school's tallest students for the last half decade or so.

Me: How did they get up there?
Chloe: Oh when you're big enough you can reach it if you stand on the seat.

Margaret and Eve have apparently done so, as their names appear along with those of all the boys. Lucy and Chloe's names are not yet there. I am reminded of Koori sacred cave paintings and special initiation rites. These children have their own.

THE SCHOOL PHOTO ALBUM 11.2.91 (page 218)

(Here, amongst other photographs, six-year-old Troy is photographed as the flower boy with the teenage girls at the local debutante ball.)

Ruralsville Photo Album is on the ledge. I haven't seen it before. Amongst the collection of colour prints of the children at school, and outside it, is a black and white newspaper cutting of three rows of spread-out and white-dressed young women, and two rows of squashed-up and dinner-suited young men. A lone little boy sits dinner-suited in the middle of the front row of the white-dressed young women.

Me: Donna, (she is at the computer beside me) what's this in here for?
Donna: That's Troy's sister's debut. He's there, see? (She names Troy as the little boy in the front row. His sister is two rows behind him.)

Other photos in the album, with labels:

"Clubs" - boys and girls cooking and eating, boys gardening, girls finger-knitting, boys weaving, girls and boys on home-made skates.
"International Dress-Up Day. Term 3, 1990." - Kylie and Jane in ankle-length sarongs.
"Melbourne Camp. Term 4, 1990." - a tram ticket stuck in.
"Christmas Concert. 1989." - Eve and Margaret, the big girls in the middle of the back row.

FRIENDSHIP DYNAMICS 26.3.91 (page 200)

(Here Jane, Chloe, Brett, Lucy, Aaron, Kylie and Donna work, write and talk.)

Jane is colouring-in a computer print-out. It reads, "Dear Mum and Dad. Happy Easter. Love from Jane." Donna is doing a pencil tracing of an animal's head. The accompanying writing is about "Native Animals. Tasmanian Glider, Wombat" etc. Chloe is watching Lucy, who is twiddling a bobby pin. Her "Australia" folder is closed in front of her. Lucy is idly colouring-in with textas the animals on the loose sheets inside her "Australia" folder. All the girls have long straight messy blond hair. Towelling elastic bands in various places. Donna wears a watch and two bracelets. Jane comes over to look at Kylie, then goes to help Troy at the computer.

Me: (to Kylie) Who are you inviting to your party?
Kylie: Troy and David.

Me: Anyone else?
Kylie: No.
Me: Jane? (Jane has been standing beside her watching her write out her invitations)
Kylie: Yes. (Jane is now writing "Slumber Party", which does not include Kylie amongst the girls named in it.)
Brett: (calling out) Mr B, Jane's annoying me. (Mr B ignores him.)
Kylie: (hopping with a disk to the computer. Puts it into the disk drive.)
Donna: (has pages and pages of "3 Pigs" drafts. Shows Mr B. Procedes to put them into her story book.)
Me: (to Donna) Are you going to copy that all out into your story book in handwriting?
Donna: Yep.
Me: Why don't you type it up on the computer?
Donna: Coz all the computers are busy. (They're not. 3 boys sit at 3 of them, but the 4th is free.)
Aaron: (reading aloud from his big script on his computer screen. Another football story about his Dad. Troy stands beside him, listening and watching.)

Chloe and Lucy come and sit facing me two desks away. I'm writing on the sloped wooden top of a desk. They're sitting on theirs. Folders on their laps. Feet on the seat. Heads higher than mine. Chloe's writing "Biggy Buggy" quite diligently. No talk. First draft.

Chloe: (to Donna, who is nearby) Donna, will ya get me a pencil sharpener? (Donna does so but gets no thanks.)
Chloe: (a bit later, again to Donna, although Lucy is beside her) Donna get me another pencil. (Donna does.)
Jane: (at the 4th computer, keying in "Slumber Party".)
Kylie: (first drafting "Two years ago when I...")

SHARPENING PENCILS 30.4.91 (page 14)
(Here Lucy and Chloe make sure I can't see what they are writing and Kylie asks me to sharpen her pencils.)

When I go over to Lucy and Chloe they put their hands over their writing and look significantly at each other. Kylie quizzes me about the sequencing of her illustrations to a book I haven't read. She knows the answers. I don't. She's overbearing. Delighted at her superior knowledge and my lack of it. Goes and photocopies her correctly ordered drawings for me. Keeps the photocopy for herself. It's got greater prestige than the original. Makes me write the title at the top. Corrects my spelling. Then brings over her coloured pencils.

Kylie: Jeanette will you sharpen these for me?
Me: No, I don't want to sharpen pencils.
Kylie: (undetered) Mr B will you sharpen these pencils for me?
Mr B: Bring them over here. (I hadn't realized she cannot sharpen them for herself. What is wrong with a rotating plastic sharpener? Mr B sharpens them all with a Stanley knife)

2.10 and Lucy and Chloe still side by side at their desk.
2.15. Four boys at computers. No girl has used a computer today.

VISITORS FROM THAILAND 14.5.91 (page 140)
(Here Kylie looks radically different. The Thai women I have brought to the school meet Mr B, Mrs P and the girls and boys.)

Arrive at lunch time. Six boys are playing football. It's damp outside but Kylie is bare-armed and bare-footed. Most of her clothes are drying inside on the heater. Mr B tells me she must have come through the paddocks today instead of walking on the road. I'm a bit surprised. This doesn't seem like her. She looks a real urchin. Very dirty.

I've brought Walalpa and Serentip with me. They have jobs like mine in Thailand. They have never seen a small school in Australia before. They say it's a bit like the village schools at home. They ask Mr B lots of questions while the children are playing outside. At the other Australian schools they've been to they've been celebrities, giving talks about Thailand etc. Here they are free to poke around, look at whatever they like, ask what they like. I ask them if they want to come out again and they say yes, maybe because they run out of film and need to take more pictures. I introduce Jane to them. I say, "This is Jane. She's been to Thailand." Pretty remarkable, I think. She has a brief conversation with them but then runs off.

Later, Walapa is talking to Mrs P, the woman who comes out once a week to do the books. She's not usually here when I am. I've introduced the Thai women to her. They're looking at the School Policy book together. Lots of talking. Serentip goes over and joins them. Chloe and Lucy both writing. Silently. Side by side. Kylie is illustrating in big coloured texta.

A NEW BABY 14.5.91 (page 194, 197)
(Here six-year-old Kylie becomes an aunt.)

Me: (to Kylie) Has your sister got that new baby yet?
Kylie: (scornfully) A course she has. She brang it home last Sunday.
Brett: (to me from across the room) Mr B pronounced (announced) on the school camp that Chloe and Kylie are aunts now.
Me: The baby was born last week while you were on the school camp?
Kylie: (loudly) Yeah. (still scornful of my lack of knowledge.)

Donna and Jane are writing outside. Round the back of the shelter shed. Donna is on her stomach facing Jane. Lying on the long wooden seat. Jane is cross-legged facing Donna. Also on the wooden seat. Both using pencil and writing rapidly. Silence. Later, they have gone back inside the classroom. Kylie comes up to me.

Kylie: You call me Auntie Kylie. (I am busy writing. I think this is what she says.)
Me: OK Auntie Kylie. (She gives me an almighty thump across the back. Three or four times. She hits me hard.)
Me: What are you doing that for?
Kylie: (angrily) I said don't call me Auntie Kylie.
Me: (genuinely shocked) I'm awfully sorry. I really thought you said call me Auntie Kylie.
Kylie: Well I didn't. (She thumps me again for good measure.)

THE RELIEVING WOMAN TEACHER 5.11.91 and 19.11.91 (page 223)
(Here Mrs X is relieving for Mr B, who is away on long service leave. The girls gang up against her.)

Lucy: Mrs X, how long till we have to come inside? (They already are inside, but I guess they didn't have to be.)
Mrs X: (to Lucy) Five minutes. (to person on the other end of the phone) None of them mastered it at all. I've got to do a few lessons on it. (5 minutes later, hangs up) Right. (loudly) Computers off. And outside to line up.

At this point she turns to say hello to me. I had phoned to ask if I could come. Mrs X answered the phone, not one of the children. I came at the time she said. She tells me Chloe plays computer games all the time, but "lacks social skills." Also tells me she was going to do the school reports but Mr B already did them before he left. Children stand in front of us, at attention, lined up, whilst she tells me this. I am silent. As the children march into the classroom, she says that Chloe and Lucy give the visiting teachers hell. 1.25, but no story. Mrs X works with the younger children from her table. They have to stand around her. Donna is noticably bigger now, and more physically mature than Lucy. Chloe still hangs on to Lucy. Now she continues her computer story. Jane is at one side of her, drafting "My Pet Alligator". Lucy is handwriting. Kylie is gazing into space from the front desk. Then she comes over to me. Donna lies on her stomach behind Chloe, Lucy and Jane.

19.12.91. Transcript from tape. Relieving teachers are unfamiliar with my note taking procedures and I feel they are too threatening for them. The audio recording from the middle of the room seems to be better, as the teacher can then forget about it. However, I miss a lot of the detailed interactions by only transcribing what I hear later, even though I was there.

*Mrs X: (loudly) That game can go off. (It's the end of Lunch-time) Jane, take the game away now please. Story writing time.***
*Mrs X: I'm sorry, this is work time. Finished? ***
*Child: This chair is spare. ***
*Child: She's got a full desk. ***
*Child: Kylie said she couldn't find it and I found it for her. ***
Child: How do you spell 'noon'?
*Mrs X: N double O N. ** There you are. I've written it out for you. ***
*Child: Donna, do you start on that side or that side? ***
*Young Child: (reading aloud) ***
*Child: What? I'm commin'. ***
*Mrs X: Now, David. ***
*Mrs X: Now. Jeanette's here today. And we're all working.***

Playtime. The classroom is empty except for Donna, Lucy and Chloe at the computers playing games.

*Girl: We were just laughin' our head off. ***
Girl: Well just use the shift.
Girl: (complaining loudly) Donna.
Mrs X: (loudly) That's it. Everybody outside. Finish. Come on.
Girl: Can I just...?
Mrs X: No. That's it. You can go outside.
Girl: You, you put this in.

Mrs X: (loudly) Everybody outside and line up.

All three of the girls roll their eyes at me when Mrs X can't see them. They walk out sighing loudly. They have signalled that I am on their side, that I understand their positioning with the relieving woman teacher. Many times during this afternoon I have been given these signs from them.

Ending

This Interlude has presented key writing and key events for the analyses that follow in the second part of the dissertation. It has also provided a break between the discussions of theories and methodologies (Chapters 2 and 3) and the analyses and conclusions from the research data (Chapters 4 and 5). Further, it has allowed me to speak as a white Australian woman who lives in the country, and to present a commmonsense view of the research in everyday language. Chapter 4 will develop approaches I have been taking in theorizing and interpreting researched events, practices and artifacts. What has been exemplified is additional to Chapter 1 and introductory to Chapter 4. In this way the Interlude serves as de-scriptions of the sites and events researched; Chapter 4's post-scriptions are their deconstructions.

As essential supporting material, the Appendices include more samples of the writing and more samples of journal entries made at the school. In my readings or deconstructions of what happened and what was produced I shall sometimes deal very briefly with one particular piece of writing or one event. At other times I shall return again and again to the same one, or consider it only once but at length. In this way my research has not been a matter of producing enough examples for detailed discussion or illustration of points, but a matter of showing how looking again and again at the same piece is an essential part of the analysis.

The photocopies that follow are not very clear because the school's photocopier was less than first class. Photographs are deliberately blurred so that people are unidentifiable. In order of presentation they are:

1. **Girls' original writings**
2. **A girl's plan of the school**
3. **Official school photograph from 1989**
4. **Donna, Chloe and Lucy writing**
5. **Margaret and Eve writing**
6. **Eve's photography: the school on Fancy Dress Day 1989. Margaret far left, Mr B as Mother Pig, Kylie front row.**
7. **Jane's photography: me on the classroom floor, writing.**

Before beginning Chapter 4 I present a summary of referential information about the girls. Here is a 1989 listing of dramatis personae.

KYLIE, age 4, beginning her first year at school, sister to Chloe.
JANE, age 7, away for a lot of the year when she goes to the Philippines with her family, has an older brother at the school.
DONNA, age 8, sits next to Lucy, her parents have a farm but her mother works in the city, likes to ride bikes, younger sister to Margaret.
LUCY, age 8, one of four children, goes to Brownies, plays the piano, daughter of maths and science teachers.
CHLOE, age 9, loves horses, new to the school this year, sister to Kylie.

MARGARET, age 11, sits next to Eve, sister to Donna, family moved to Ruralsville a couple of years ago.

EVE, age 11, lives in an old timber church being renovated as a house, only child, mother is an artist who drives a school bus, father is an English teacher.

Dame Nellie Melba was born Helen Porter
10 May 1861 in Richmond Melbourne. N
as a child and used to climb on
piano and listen to her mother pla
Helen married Charles Armstrong in
in 1882 she started taking singing
happy in her marriage . could no
to become a great singer. In 1886, w
sailed for England She had ma
showed great courage and indi
Paris and commenced lessons u
who said "At last I have found a
appeared in Europe ^at Bru (the opera Rigoletto)
was immediately acclaimed a
became the best known and
woman in the world She ha
her own life time

● PART · 3 OF THE . WORM ●
Donna and Anthony got divorced
Donna got married to Brett
. Brett gave Donna to
cats from wedding presents
the cat had kittens 20. Brett
and Donna had 10 more
kids. Their names were Anna,
Andrew, Ned, Kelly. Tom. Tilly.
Candy, Cat. Mandy and Mary.

Donna
Brett
FAMILY
EVERON

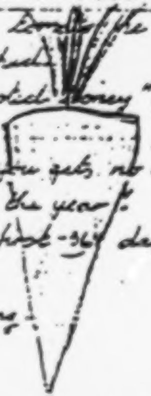
THE DAY JEANETTE TRIED TO GET HER L PLATES BY

Maire

"Mum could you drive me
down to the R.T.A?
"OK." "Lets go.
"Mum now I don't think I
to go"
Don't be a chiken"
I went down the path
"I would like to get a
licence please
"O.K" - "What's your name?
Jeanette Wooly
"Hop in the car"
How do you I start it
Don't you know?
"No"
Turn the key"
Brooom Brooom
"Put your foot on the
clutch and put it i
first gear"
"Where is that?
Leave it up to luck
BRAKE BRAKE
[illegible] You idiot
made me hit my
[illegible]

THE SAVAGE SALAD

Not salad again Mum" I moaned
"Eat it up Lisa or you'll have no tea".
I picked the smallest piece of carrot and it bit me
"Ouch! That piece of carrot bit me
"Don't tell fibs Lisa" dad said in a stern voice as he took the biggest tomato he could find. He munched and munched.
"The best tomato I've ever tasted honey" dad said
"Lisa seeing you have lied you gets no more pocket money for the rest of the year".
"Dad, but it's only January the first 364 days to go."
"That not fair" said something
Lisa don't answer back"
"I didn't"
Out of the salad came a carrot. He looked like him. He said "Give Lisa back her pocket money
"OK" said Dad
Then the carrot ran away. Since then we have



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te name was Noel I Love him
ery much i madreyed him in 1919
; was a Cuty man and all the
rls yer after Noel. Tuesday 27th of
ebruary

Mr B is a good teacher.

JEANETTES FIRST JOB

THIS STORY IS A CONTUITATTION OF STORY THE DAY
JEANETTE TRIED TO GET HER L PLATES ....
TORY JEANNETT HAD A GO AT GETTING HER L PLATES
CEED ....
B GOES SINCE THEN AND FINALLY GOT HER L PLATES. NOW I
GET A JOB SHE-SAID".MUM WHERES THE PAPER"?"IN THE
'E TOLD YOU NOT TO PUT IT IN THE FIRE UNTIL I'VE READ
U NEVER READ IT JEANETT DARLING AND I COULDNT SEE YOU
".WHY NOT YOU HAVE TO START SOMEWHERE".DARLING I THIN
TIME YOU START PAYING ME BOARD EVERY WEEK","ALRIGHT
ME $10.00 A WEEK INSTEAD OF $12.00 A WEEK"," O.K. LOV
BED NOW GOODNIGHT" "GOODNIGHT".

"MORNING JEANETTE LOVE" "WHERE THE PAPER?"

SLUMBER PARTY!

Tonight I'm haveing a Slumber Party
And Donna , Chloe and Lucy are
comeing and we are going to the beac
at 6 00 to 800 [illegible] Tonight is the
Chloe came firsaed then Lucy came
then Donna then we went to the
I saw a shark and it aet someon
and he die then we went back h
and went to bed In the morning
[illegible] the BeAch at 8:00 to 12:00

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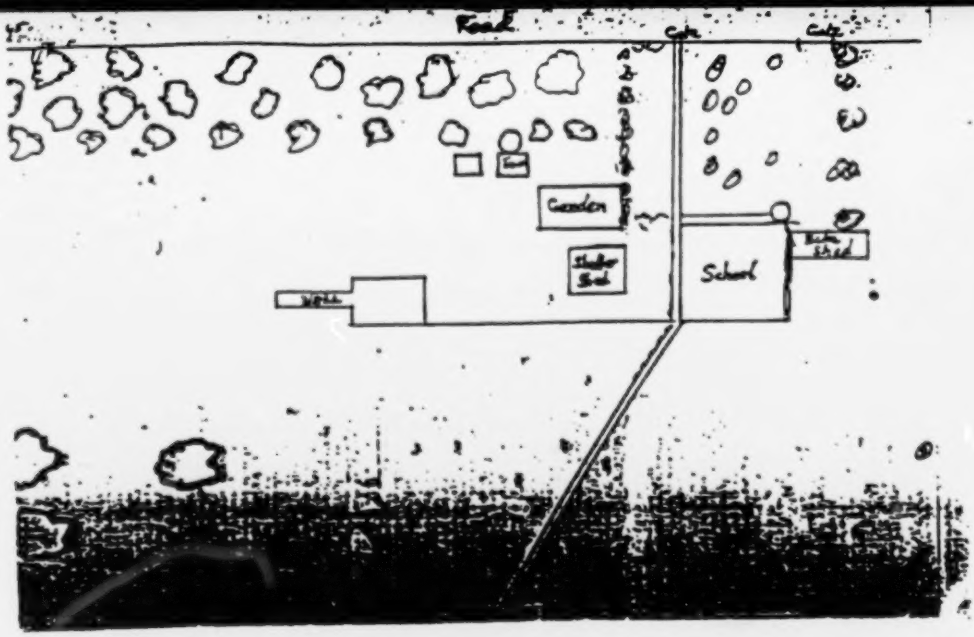
Road
Gate
Gate
Garden
Shelter Shed
School
Bike Shed

Ruralsville Primary School 1989

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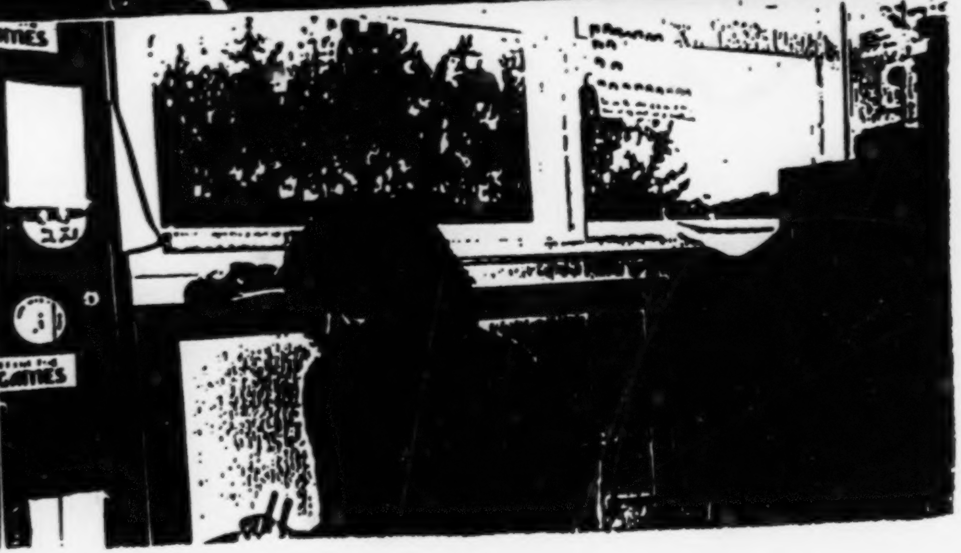
GAMES
GAMES

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CHAPTER FOUR

POST-SCRIPTIONS OF DATA

Here the Writings, the Chronology and the Interviews are read in a variety of poststructuralist ways. This involves consideration of school discourses that the texts come from and academic discourses that I shall be taking them to. The result in this chapter is a series of deconstructive descriptions of the research data. 'Description', however, implies a taken-for-grantedness that I am not addressing. As terminology, I considered calling my analyses 'speculations', 'interrogations', 'musings' or 'stories'. As I am writing after the events of the original writing, 'post-scriptions' will be the most useful term for what is produced in this chapter. There will be four such readings/analyses, with each represented by a section: introductory post-scriptions, feminist post-scriptions, psychoanalytic post-scriptions and cultural post-scriptions. In line with deconstructive practices, they represent not the application of theory but the discursive production of theory. The interpretations presented as this chapter need to be seen as an exploratory series of descriptions of subjectivity.

1. Introductory Post-Scriptions

As a way of working eventually to a feminist poststructuralism in the next section, I try to show in this section how Derridean and Foucauldian poststructuralisms can operate as textual deconstructings. The first post-scription is an exemplification of the way I shall be reading the data in the rest of this chapter. From having demonstrated my analysis/critique methodology, I then go on in the next sections to take my readings/analyses into the theories I particularly want to focus on.

Deconstruction

The two arguments of Derrida's poststructuralism are that meaning is dispersed throughout language/texts and that such meanings are deferred in time. In this section I consider a selection of writings produced by the girls and boys (Rhedding-Jones forthcoming, a). Sometimes the same writing piece is reconsidered to demonstrate different ways of reading. My use of ... indicates that I have cut the text at this point.

Looking at the text of Jane's writing of *SLUMBER PARTY* I see a chain of relationships:

Tonight Im having a SLUMBER PARTY. And Donna, Chloe and Lucy are coming we are going to the beach from 6.00 to 8.00. ... I saw a shark and it ate someone and he died. Then we went back home and went to bed ...

Jane begins with her girl friends, goes on to the shark and the person it ate and returns to her friends. The killing by the shark becomes not the central focus of the piece but an interlude between her time with her friends. The meaning of the piece is not the discontinuity of the life of the one eaten by the shark but the continuity of her friendships.

The argument of Foucault's poststructuralism is that power exists at the level of micro-practices. This second form of poststructuralism operates not by deconstructing the texts, as does Derridean analysis, but by isolating, identifying and analysing unequal relationships. Here is an example from the Chronology:

(14.5.91)
I've brought Walapa and Serentip with me. They have jobs like mine in Thailand. They have never seen a small school in Australia before. They say it's a bit like the village schools at home. They ask Mr B lots of questions while the children are playing outside ... Walapa is talking to Mrs P, the woman who comes out once a week to do the books. They're looking at the School Policy Booklet together. Lots of talking ...

A meaning of the questions Walapa and Serentip ask Mr B is related to their view of him as teacher and as man. This is borne out by their conversation with the woman who does the books. Here there is lots of talking, not an asking of questions, which implies the positioning of equals despite the Thai women's race and professional status.

Similarly, an example from a conversation I had with Kylie shows the wielding of power in the micro matters of the classroom. Identifying events and practices such as these is itself a form of Foucauldian poststructuralism:

(30.4.91)
K: (age 6) Jeanette will you sharpen these for me?
Me: No, I don't want to sharpen pencils.
K: (undeterred) Mr B will you sharpen these pencils for me?
Mr B: Bring them over here. (I hadn't realized she cannot sharpen them for herself. What is wrong with a rotating plastic sharpener? Mr B sharpens them all with a Stanley knife.)

Here Kylie could be read as successfully requesting her teacher to do her sharpening, and hence as the one with the power. The event could also be read as Mr B having the power in that he is the one to manipulate the knife. In either or both of these ways the school can be seen to constitute and regulate discourse. Following Foucault, a researcher tries to account not for what the text really means, but how it came to be what it is. In this way, my next interrogation of the text would be about the history of Kylie not using a rotating plastic sharpener. What is unsaid in this little conversation is just as important as what has been said, and it is this form of theorizing the unsaid that makes such analysis poststructuralist. Although theorizing the unsaid is not unique to poststructuralist theories, I shall try to show some of the combinations of qualities that are.

A poststructuralist reader considers the semiotics off/of the text. The writing pieces produced by Jane and Aaron differ in the way that they look. Next I reconsider Jane's *SLUMBER PARTY* and introduce Aaron's *FOOTBALL MATCH*. Jane's is handwritten; Aaron's is a computer print-out. Here is a larger extract of Jane's text, followed by a segment of Aaron's:

Tonight Im having a SLUMBER PARTY. And Donna, Chloe and Lucy are coming we are going to the beach from 6.00 to 8.00. Tonight is the night. Chloe came first. Then Lucy came. Then Donna. Then we went to the beach. I saw a shark and it ate someone and he died. In the morning we went to the beach from 8.00 to 12.00. Then everyone went home ... (Jane)

...by 5 points, the ball bounced again, Dad tapped it out, it went to Dad's goal's, Dad's team got a free kick, because someone got tripped. they kicked the ball it was a goal... (Aaron)

Forms of linguistic analysis which consider only words cannot make the point that the look of the writing-counts. Jane's in total is ten lines of handwriting, complete with unreadable crossings out. Aaron's is nineteen lines of large print computer paper, with no mistakes. Deconstructions following Foucault's enable us to see the politics of the two writers as they present themselves to the world, or at least to me as the classroom researcher. Aaron's politics of completion with the help of technology allow him to present himself as skilled, careful and professional. Jane's politics are that I shall be interested in what she has written even before she fixes it up, and maybe she won't. Have I by being female and friendly to girls contributed to her lack of polish? Again, to take the lead from Foucault, what is the history of the present moment of writing in the production of the girl's narrative and the boy's recount?

A further addressing of the differences in these writing presentations leaves me wondering whether my findings about girls will contradict the research where girls are neat and careful. Did Aaron simply have an obliging parent who introduced him to computers at home and Jane didn't? How can I know if my assumptions are overeactions or mis-readings? In trying to read the data, I can only state in advance that I am aware of these problems. But rather than running away from them I shall address them, and eventually make them part of my theoretical discussions.

I asked Aaron if what he wrote what really happened and he said 'yes'. When I asked Jane she smiled and said 'not really'. In following my initial questioning I wondered whether schools are enabling boys, in free-choice writing time, to develop skills for which men have a history of success in the material world: and whether girls are moving into a world of fantasy already at Jane's age of eight. How is it that a girl and a boy know by primary school to follow in the footsteps of the gendered generations before? Can one example of a computer print-out be taken as an effect of the exercise of power by a boy in a classroom? What is the power of the girl?

Taking the same texts by Jane and Aaron again, this time following a Derrida-type deconstruction, the following emerges. Jane writes with more complexity than I had imagined. I see now that I have put omission dots in the transcript I have made of what she wrote. I find her original draft, and I see that where my dots are she wrote:

Tonight is the night. Chloe came first. Then Lucy came. Then Donna. Then we went to the beach.

At the end of her piece she has written:

In the morning we went to the beach at 8.00 to 12.00.

One meaning I make from these sentences is that Jane is highly conscious of time as important, even inserting its details into her narrative and thereby showing that her values are not only of fantasy but of pragmatics. In addition, she carefully reconsiders the reordering of her friends and writes their names differently the second time.

This second ordering corresponds with her then current (and accurate) understanding of the popularity stakes amongst the girls at the school, for these names are the names of real people. The girl most belittled by the others is named last. As well as now seeing these gaps between what is valued and disvalued, I am acutely aware that her phrase, *'tonight is the night'* has other referents for many women readers.

The meaning of Aaron's text is also deferred in time for me as its reader. The next time I see him he tells me he is going to see his Dad in the next holidays he thinks. For me, since then, this piece of his writing is always sad. The meaning of writing cannot be found in the writing. It is dispersed throughout other forms of language, and language is not the only semiotic there is.

Following Derrida's framings, where signification is seen as a process of infinite free play, providing neat little examples of meaning is not as important as the critique of rationalization which comes from the various readings. Meaning occurs only in specific textual locations and in a relation to difference from all other textual locations. This is why the gathering of both written language and spoken language data was important to the Ruralsville research project. Seeing what Kylie wrote may not be as important as knowing what she wants to sharpen her pencil for. Linking a conversation to what she eventually wrote may be crucial, as the meaning of conversation may be deferred to the meaning of writing. The Derridean notion that words are only signs of real substance, which is always elsewhere, can in these ways lead poststructuralist researchers to non-verbal data. Here my notes from the Chronology are useful:

(30.4.91)
Kylie quizzes me about the sequencing of her illustrations. She knows the answers. I don't. She's overbearing. Delighted at her superior knowledge and my lack of it. Goes and photocopies it for me. Keeps the photocopy for herself. It's got greater prestige than

the original. Makes me write the title at the top. Corrects my spelling. Then brings over her coloured pencils.

For Kylie, the important action here is not the writing, but the colouring in of the illustration that accompanies it. In colouring in she has power, skills, delight; in writing, as yet, she does not. The careful selection of colours and the details of not going over the wrong lines is, for her, what counts. Through illustrations she can manipulate me; through writing, she is still the one manipulated, although in the surface detail of spelling she begins to have power. I begin to see the arts of the girlish illustrations/decorations that accompany their writing in a new light.

Later, I return to what she wrote on the day I have so far described. My file contains a copy of this (30.4.91):

1.the wild woolly child chased lions up ladders
2.she had to go to the barber shop One day
3.a lady had a chainsaw to cut her hair. The chainsaw broke
4.then she went home
5.she brushed her hair
6.she chased the barber.

Here then is Kylie's written text to match the published illustrations she has had to sequence. Her delight in my lack of knowledge about their correct order reflects the accuracy of this narrative schema she has produced as her writing for the day. This is what she wanted to sharpen her pencils for. As a teacher-directed piece of work, this writing gives Kylie the chance to demonstrate a mastery over lack of order. The need for coloured pencils was prompted by the knowledge that the writing represents success. I look again at the unlikely scenario of the six-part writing: a child is chasing lions, then she has to go to the barber's, the barber is a 'lady' with a chainsaw which breaks, the girl-child goes home, brushes her hair and then chases the 'lady' barber. I search my records for a photocopy of the graphics that determined Kylie's narrative. I can find nothing. The evidence is lost. But what is important, I rationalize, is not what I make of the graphics but what Kylie **did**.

When I look again at Jane's writing file I discover that the copy she gave me of the 'Shark Story' was her original draft. Amongst some writing she has casually given me some months later is a computer print-out (much reduced in length) of the same story. I reproduce it here, followed by the complete version of her first-draft handwriting. What am I now to make of my earlier comments about boys' and girls' presumed differences? Is this a study of children's writing or of myself?

(computer print-out)

Tonight I'm haveing a Slumber Party And Donna. Chloe and Lucy are comeing and we are going to the beach at 6:00 to 8:00 Tonight is the night Chloe came firsed then Lucy came then Donna then we went to the Beach I saw a shark and it aet someone and he die. Then we went back home and went to bed. In the morning we went to the Beach at 8:00 to 12:00.

(ending of handwritten shark story)

In a few days it was Donnas birthday and I went and Chloe and Lucy too. Donna had an ice cream cake. We went to bed. Donna went straight to sleep and we went to eat all the food in the kitchen. Then we went to bed. In the morning we woke up early. Donna was still asleep. She was snoring so we woke her up. Then we went in the pool. We got out and make a cake. It was fun. We ate it. After that we went on the motor boke. Then we went to the Philippines and the plane nearly crashed. We went to a disco and got drunk. The next day I had a hangover. After that we went to get something to eat for breakfast. I had pancakes. We then went on a bus to a different place. It took us 10 hours to get there. Then we wnt to a bar to get a drink and then we went to a disco.

The ending of the handwritten version seems to be an additional and quite a different story. Jane knows how to make narrative continue but not how to end it. The constant additions of more and more episodes without resolutions may reflect more the way Jane sees life than the way she knows published stories are. Perhaps a more accurate observation is that the writing is a clear reflection of a soap opera. Deconstructing what is written presents an endless line or circle of possibilities. One of the problems I face as a researcher of this kind is where to select, where to cut and where to make links. A solution is to return not only to the data (and my pleasures of the texts) but to the theories I set out to explore.

What I have so far produced is more of a Derridean deconstruction that a Foucault criticism (Cherryholmes 1988:160). But in presenting a Derridean deconstruction my examples are Foucualt-based in that they yield a history and a politics of the moment of their happenings. The structuring of my analytical content is unshapely by some standards, but this is what I set out to achieve. The hierarchical oppositions of rightness/wrongness and neatness/messyness are, I hope, beginning to be combined and challenged. In this way, what may appear as given in texts is shown to be changeable and culturally constructed (Gilbert 1987:248). The culture I placed myself in as the empirical researcher is the culture of the school: as the reader of the data I place myself amongst a culture of theorists.

Reading

In these ways I am two kinds of reader: the reader who attended the events described and the subsequent reader of the events separated in time by the production of the Chronology. Surprising to me now is the fact that I really did not read the texts of the girls' and boys' writing at all until much later when I got the photocopies out of my file. This was because at the time I was busy relating to the people and events of the classroom, and this relating included my classroom production of the original and handwritten research notes (the Chronology).

The nature of my different readings of the generically different data sources depends not only on time but on which particular discourse currently engaged me. Hence in this section of this chapter I am engaged with discourses of poststructuralism, but not especially with a feminist poststructuralism or with the psychoanalytic poststructuralisms I shall explore later. This freedom or self-chosen constraint as a reader is a result of my own agency, but as I shall show, such freedoms are not always there for the girls in the study. To elaborate on the points I need to make about reading, I shall return to the texts already introduced in my consideration of deconstruction. Here is a second look at the text I wrote concerning the Thai lecturers' visit to the school:

I've brought Walapa and Serentip with me. They have jobs like mine in Thailand. They have never seen a small school in Australia before. They say it's a bit like the village schools at home. They ask Mr B lots of questions while the children are playing outside ... Walapa is talking to Mrs P, the woman who comes out once a week to do the books. They're looking a the School Policy Booklet together. Lots of talking ...

The context by which Walapa and Serentip judge the Ruralsville school is the one with which they are familiar: the small village schools at home in Thailand. It is the similarity they notice and point out, not the differences. This may be a part of their own culture of niceness rather than a less-Thai confrontation of critique. The meaning of the school for them is that Australia and Thailand can have elements of sameness. Reading small-school discourses in this way may be a measure of home-sickness, desire to please or inability to deal with other possibilities. A reader-response theory (Patterson 1989) can apply to real-life situations as well as to a reading of written words. However, poststructuralism is not a reader-response theory as it proposes many simultaneous meanings at once. Further, pedagogies of reading and feminist strategies of reading are not the same. Looking for different meanings and going against the text (Barthes 1977, Derrida 1976, Miller 1986) is not the same as getting singular meaning out of text by combining knowledge of – graphophonics, syntax and semantics (Goodman 1968, Smith 1982).

When Kylie asked me:

K: (age 6) Jeanette will you sharpen these for me?
Me: No, I don't want to sharpen pencils.

my reply was entirely from my own selfish position. My immediate response was not to identify with her as the one who needed pencils sharpened, but with myself as the one who needed to do something else. In relocating myself as the non-selfish one who now wants to understand Kylie's writing, I am not here shifting positions: I am still giving priority to my position as a researcher. Looking again at my own writing of a few moments ago I see that I wrote:

As a teacher-directed piece of work, this writing gives Kylie the chance to demonstrate a mastery [sic] *over lack of order.*

In this there is nothing of the me who wants to get on with something else (and not much of the feminist poststructuralist either). Being a reader of what happens at the time of its happening is not the same as being a reader of writing. Reading written texts needs full attention: life readings at the time are a matter of choice. By having converted the life-texts into written texts (the Chronology) I can thus render them discursive in a different way from the way they were on the dates they were recorded.

Discourse

Writing under erasure, as Derrida describes it, means being aware of one's own discursive positioning as subverter and inscriber. Thus the Ruralsville research potentially both subverts the school system where femininity is constructed and reinscribes some of the traditional practices regarding femininity. Subversion works as a research process by foregrounding discourses that introduce gender constructions: a Foucauldian concept. Following Foucault, the written language of the girls can be seen to be a discursive site of political struggle. Seeing girls' writing like this involves asking myself, as a reader, what politics the girls engaged in, as textual productions. In some instances I have a record of the spoken language of the classroom at the moment of writing. In the case of the writing extract I shall consider next I do not have a recording of what was concurrently said. This dual record is not necessary for the point I am about to make, however, as the political struggle it exemplifies is not one of classroom interaction. Here the political struggle is between the two protagonists in Margaret's story: a mother and a daughter:

"Stop biting your nails."
"Sorry Mum."
"Stop biting your nails."
"I will not do it again.

Here Margaret writes of a daughter who makes no attempt to challenge the power of the mother (Rhedding-Jones 1991a). But in the next two sentences Margaret temporarily loses her positioning as she struggles to put herself in line with the mother, via the first person pronoun:

I must think of somthing. She thought for ages then I got it. If I get some steel I can make some metal nails and wire them so when she goes to bite her nails she will get a shock. The Mother placed the metal nails on the fingers.

Here we can read Margaret's struggle, through her writing, to not be the dutiful daughter but the powerful mother. Evidence of a struggle for Donna, between acknowledging Anthony's 'goodness' and his smashing up of her car, is further evidence of writing being a discursive site of political power:

Anthony his brother was a good Boy too. But Anthony Got a car and smashed it up it was a white and it was my Car

Here Donna writes first that Anthony was a 'good Boy', but she is unable to reconcile this with what he does to her car. I have quoted Donna's entire piece of writing here, so it appears that all she could do was acknowledge the contradiction and what I read as her inherent struggle, and leave it at that. However, she may not be struggling at all; she may simply be stating two different facts about Anthony.

The beginning of Aaron's writing, about the football match and his father, is interesting especially as he told me the football match 'really' happened:

We got to the club and Dad went in. Mum said "good luck" and went home. I stayed to watch Dad. I went in the club rooms with him.

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The struggle here is what Aaron chooses to say about his father. Given that I have revealed he has told me he is 'going to see his Dad next holidays he thinks', what do I now make of his story about father-son togetherness and mother saying good luck? This appears to be either a fabrication or a recollection, not a current event. But the most interesting point, in relation to the notion of writing being a site for struggle, is that Aaron's production of his writing is located between the discourses of the happy-son-in-together-family and the discourse of whatever it is he currently lives through. It is the latter discourse which he maybe sees as not appropriate for a writing topic at school, but which he begins to tell me about as an aside. How now can I retain my earlier reading of Aaron as a potential member of a powerful (male?) élite with access to technology and the skills to produce perfect products? What shall I do about the way I have dichotomized political struggle as being power or non-power?

For Jane, the contradictory discourses of girlish friendships and murderous sharks are dealt with by her writing of the following:

Chloe came firsed then Lucy came then Donna then we went to the Beach I saw a shark and it aet someone and he die.

The two discourses are not resolved by the death of the shark's victim, but the episode is interesting in that it is not the shark who dies. Undeterred, Jane moves her narrative immediately into a story of discos in the Philippines:

Then we went to the Philippines and the plane nearly crashed. We went to a disco and got drunk.

Is this a femininity of evasion? A reflection of today's postmodern tempo? A less intellectual series of questions would include: what was in the news the night before? was she asked to write a story about a shark? My suggestion is that as Jane had actually been to the Philippines with her parents that year she simply saw a flight overseas as quite a possibility for her girl protagonists when they woke up and began the next new day.

In these ways discourse is not the same as text. Discourse is all-pervasive. For my purposes here I cannot accept Derrida's notion that there is nothing but text (1976). What i am calling 'text' is a particular and contained production that can be described as having a textuality (Walkerdine 1987:8). I see each piece of writing as an example of a text, and each represents the range of discourses that informs it. This means that there is now a textuality also to each of the dated entries in the Chronology, and that each can be deconstructed/described as a text in itself and as a part of its discourses. It is not this naming that is important: it is the function of the naming.

In this dissertation, texts are also each separate piece of writing written by the girls and the boys and each interview I conducted with the girls. Discourse is what makes each text the way that it is. In this poststructuralist sense, discourse is more than contextual and more than ideological. Seeing writing not only as an artifact allows for the theorizing of its production. It is this production that is discursive, and this is why I cannot define it. But the production produces subjectivity. De-scribing and re-describing how the Writings came to be produced is thus a way of theorizing discourse.

For Kylie, the discourse of power surrounding her writing of *THE WILD WOOLY CHILD* maybe included the conversations with me and with Mr B regarding who would sharpen her pencils. As the one who got what she wanted, she was then ready, through her narrative, to chase the lions and, ultimately, the barber with the chain saw:

1. the wild woolly child chased lions up ladders

Additionally, being given the picture series by the teacher and having only to order them and write about them meant for Kylie an entry into a discourse of power. Here she was saved the necessity of dreaming up her own writing topic - a bugbear of her usual Tuesday afternoons. Here I talked with Kylie three years after the writing event (1.6.92):

Me: How did you come to write this one? (reading "The Wild Woolly Child")
K: We already had it and Mr B made us write it down.
Me: What do you mean you already had it?
K: Like we had the book at school.

The positioning of power in discourse can also be deconstructed by the ways that Jane positions Donna in the following:

In a few days it was Donnas birthday and I went and Chloe and Lucy too. Donna had an ice cream cake. We went to bed. Donna went straight to sleep and we went to eat all the food in the kitchen.

Here it is Donna who has the birthday and who supposedly would be the one to control what happens. However, Jane, who is a year or two younger than all of the girls in her story, positions herself with Chloe and Lucy and against Donna: Donna goes to sleep at her slumber party and while she is asleep her friends eat up 'all the food in the kitchen'. This is a politically astute move for Jane to have made. The schoolgirl dynamics cast Donna as the one socially on the outer (16.10.90), so Jane opts not for friendship with Donna but with Lucy and Chloe. Writing Donna into the narrative as the one having the birthday (but disempowered by being deserted by her friends) thus doubly disadvantages her. What Jane does is seize the writing moment as the time to discursively position herself as aligned to the Chloe/Lucy duo (22.10.90).

Language thus gives only indirect access to meanings, as I have shown by these readings of what happened regarding girlish positioning. Putting meanings together across a series of events produces a different picture of what happens as a result of considering discourses rather than only the text of what Jane wrote. At Ruralsville, writing time serves to literally inscribe particular subjectivies, both those of the discursively constructed writer and those, in fantasy, of the discursively written about. The regulating practices of writing's production are in this way a function of schoolgirl discourses. Writing at Ruralsville is a social act engaging not only the writers but those who become the subjects of story. What I would like to show is why some discourses are adopted and some are not; or to put it more poststructurally, why they all are and when. I looked for what prepared Jane for being able to displace Donna. Jane is the younger of the two by a year, yet she has given the power to herself by her writing.

The Chronology is no help here, as the date of the computer print-out version of the story (11.2.91) must be a week or so after the handwritten version was produced. Although I was at the school on this day I was not there for the first week of school, which is when I think the first draft must have been written. But social patterns can move slowly. On 11.2.91 Lucy, Chloe and Jane are together 'down by the school gate where the flowers are.' Donna is alone inside the classroom at playtime. Jane stands silently beside Lucy and Chloe as they transgress the school rules to show me how they throw tomatoes on the shelter shed roof.

What is Donna doing inside at playtime? She is typing up her story on the computer keyboard. What is it? It is another version of the *L PLATES* stories begun by her sister Margaret two years ago when she was in grade six. The reproduction of narratives is a feature of these girls' storying. What Margaret began as a resistant discourse at the back of the bike sheds with Eve (11.4.89) has been remembered, by impact, by the younger girls. These girls in turn write their own *L PLATE* stories to maintain the girlish tradition (Eve 17.10.89, Jane 7.5.91). Donna's version reads:

I got my lichened [licence]. *Anthony helped me drive I was a good driver so Anthony said that I was the best driver he had tought people so he gave me my P Plates so he is cool because he gave my my P's my mum gave me a Pink car for me and my boy frind its a wagon its so cool its pink with black and blue its the best car out all the arther cars are dumb thay are yellow and green they are all yuck.*

Here Donna ignores the trio of schoolgirls making her life miserable by their exclusions of her. In this story there is no mention of Chloe, Lucy or Jane. Instead Donna writes of her own competence as a driver, her solidarity with her male driving teacher, her boyfriend and her car-giving mother. I suspect there is also a solidarity with the older sister who two years ago provided the metaphor of the licence to drive as a symbol of power. The power that Donna this day lacks may be the power to join the friendship group of girls, but discursively she takes the power metaphoricaly into her own hands by her inscription of the steering wheel. I looked for what was happening with the boys. Without the reading I have already given of Aaron as the boy with the absent father, he may appear to have no problems with finding access to discourses of power. But does he simply identify with his Dad? Or does he, by writing, displace and relocate himself as a subject? Here I reproduce his entire piece of writing. Although my study is not about boys, Aaron's discursively placed text serves an example of my postscribing of data. In the following sections of this chapter I overlay my poststructuralisms with various theories of feminism, psychoanalyses and culture. But here I am seeking only to demonstrate what readings of school-produced writing might look like following Derridean and Foucauldian framings:

Today Dad had to go to footy. He played for Klinden and he was going to play against menang. he was going in a minute. We got to the club abd Dad went in. Mum said "good luck: and went home. I stayed to watch Dad. I went in the club rooms with him. The Menang club came out and a lot of people cheered. They ran around the field. Dads team came out ond more people cheered for them they ran around the field. the whistle blew. Every one got in their places. the basll bounced. It was tapped out by dad's team, but it went towards the other teams ens. this browm headed guy got the ball and ran towerds Dad's goal. he kicked it and Dad took a famous mark. He was right in front of the goals. He kicked it. It was a very powerful kick. It went through for a point. The score was Klinded 1.4.10 Menang was 2.3.15 Menang was winning by 5 points the ball bounced again. Dad tapped it out. It went to dad's goal's. dad's team got a free kick, because someone got tripped. They kicked the ball it was a goal. that meant the score was 7.5.41 menang 7.5.41 So it meant it was a draw. But there was one quarter to go. the ball was bounced/ It was tapped out. It was going to boun through the goals, but it was a point. so *the score was 10.10.170 Menang 10.9.169 the siren went and it was a real close game. Klinden won by a point. The end.*

One reading of this is that disposing of Mum is easy. She just says 'good luck' and goes home. For her the discourse of masculine power is closed by her son. But another reading, given the extra-textual information that Aaron cannot see his Dad, is that his detailed fantasy or memory is what he clings to. Here his mum's inclusion represents Aaron's wish for the 'happy family' that is no more.

Postmodernism

In writing, a postmodern shift is evidenced by self-conscious fragmentations, juxtapositionings and shocks. Further, such writing reflects today's technologies, postcolonialism, socio/cultural changes and abolition of meta-theory. If there is evidence of the postmodern classroom in the Chronology this is not by my intent but because this is how classrooms now are. I am not theorizing this, though. The purpose of this small sub-section on postmodernism in this chapter is only to clarify my position as a poststructuralist and to further introduce descriptions of discourses.

As writing is always a product of its own time in history, it is also place and culture specific. What the Ruralsville girls wrote cannot be the same as the girls a generation ago wrote, or as they themselves would write away from the school. Although I know the older girls wrote diaries at home, I never saw these diaries. Neither do I have any record of the writing produced by the Ruralsville girls in the 130 years of its history prior to my research project. I can remember some of what I wrote myself as seven year old, and referred to it in the Preface. For me, then, writing at school was another chance to be a 'good' girl, as my particular modernist girlhood discursively positioned me to be. (I later obeyed my parents by not taking up my scholarship to go to University when I left school. Instead I kept them happy by working in an insurance office as a untrained clerk. Some years later, after completing a 'trained infant teachers' certificate', I again resisted University when I refused a second scholarship and got married instead.) For Margaret, there may be more choices. She writes:

"Stop biting your nails."
"Sorry Mum."
Stop biting your nails."
"I will not do it again."

I (she) *must think of something. She thought for ages. Then she got it. If I get some steel I can make some metal nails and wire them so whan she goes to her nails she will get a shock. The mother placed the metal nails on the fingers. "Och"*

"Mum my nails are giving me shocks."

"Serves you right."

A few weeks later. "Mum my nails have grown."

"Good"

Now don't bit your nails or I will put the shocking steel finger nails on your fingers.

In one way this writing positions the mother as the one with the power. In another way it allows the daughter to be the mother by dreaming up the solutions and enforcing her own order. Presenting the mother as some kind of ogre is a freedom that was not available to me at Margaret's age, though as one childish writer I no more represented my generation than she does hers. As a postmodernist narrative I guess Margaret's story could be a transformation of a traditional moralist story frequently told or read to 'children'. In a similar vein, the transformation involves a substitution of technology for the maternal command to 'Stop biting your nails'. Its complex postitioning, irony and selfconsciousness may seem to mark it as postmodern. Certainly my own girlish view of the world as an ordered, deterministic and certain cosmos appears not to be reflected in Donna's writing:

They day I Got A CAR. It was a White CAR.

The man who tecked me name was Brad he was a good man and Anthony his brother was a good Boy too. But Anthony Got a car and smashed it up it was a white and it was my Car and I was Cross with Anthony Brad brother was good anough to Give me a red Car but i sold it for a white car and it was the zacley the samm as my first Car it was a wagein and it was a sporty Car Wagein and it was a sporty car. I pood a monoy in my wagein.

The End

In this I hear seven year old Donna saying her world is disordered, that nothing is predetermined and that nothing is certain. She has some confusions about goodness, but she appears to be quite at home with the state of things. She can buy and sell cars, learn (from a man) how to drive them and successfully deal with the men who smash them up. The coming and going of cars (and maybe of men) is described as a fact of life, a very different scenario from those of my own 'childhood'. Donna's writing is imaginative, futuristic and empowered. Fantasizing owning a car or a horse was, for the me of my 'childhood', an impossibility.

2. Feminist Post-Scriptions

In this section I reflect a range of feminist poststructuralist positions. My deconstructions now develop a feminist analysis of discourse, although I found it difficult to keep feminism out of the previous section. Much of what I have written there can be understood as feminism even though I tried to produce Foucault/Derrida orientations. The poststructuralist theories I now explore, pragmatically, include agency, gender and subjectivity. In doing so I draw again on the three primary sources of data: Writings, Chronology and Interviews. Here the girls whose writing I present are, in order, Kylie, Eve and Margaret.

Agency

The movement to autonomy can be regarded as a process of 'growing up'; but some forms of femininity do not allow autonomy to develop. Within patriarchy and phallocentricism, agency is restricted. For the girls at Ruralsville 'growing up' does not, by itself, guarantee an agentic postioning. It is not a matter of comparing the teen-aged Eve in 1992 with the four year old beginning-school Kylie in 1989. Rather, the question is: if girls are to undergo a process of change that results in their agency, how does this happen? Autonomous agents attribute feelings to themselves (Walkerdine 1990:32), not to circumstances or to other people's causing. Determining one's own action is a result not of choices made from set paths but of making the paths. In this section of the descriptive analysis of the data I looked for instances of non-passivity (De Lauretis 1990a:136-137). At the end of this section my discussion of subjectivity brings together what I shall say about agency and gender.

An extract from the Chronology (21.2.89) shows Kylie to be submissive to the discourses of schooling, but eager to take on whatever is around her. Here she tells Mr B what she wants to write and he scribes for her. At this stage she is still four years of age and has been attending school for two weeks. She asks Mr B to write:

I am a kangaroo.
I bounce and I jump.
I eat grass.

Mr B writes so that his letters are not quite joined, and Kylie's task is to join them up by writing over the top of them. She has had enough by the end of the second sentence and stops there and does a drawing of a kangaroo with head, a face, legs, tail and a pouch. Mr

B. says. 'It's cute'. and writes 'It's cute' underneath his other writing. At the time of observing this, I felt vaguely unhappy with the word 'cute' and thought that maybe Mr B was positioning Kylie herself as cute. He did not write the word on any of the younger boys' work, then or any other day. Later, there was evidence, in classroom conversations and on videos of the school camp, that not only Mr B, but many of the older girls and boys at the school put Kylie in this position of cuteness. She was the youngest girl at the school by two years and spent a lot of time playing with her long hair and writing on her arm with a texta colour.

Three years later I came back to this piece of writing in my file. I asked Kylie, then aged eight, what she thought of it (1.6.92). This discussion that she and I had took place on the floor of her bedroom, and she recorded it with my little casette player. She spent a long time playing it back afterwards listening to what had been said.

Me: That's actually the very first one I got from you. I look at the dates on them.
K: Oh yeah.
Me: So it's two weeks before (before she wrote the piece we have just discussed), It's the very first thing that you did (in my file).
K: Oh yeah. (Reads it aloud.) And I draw a kangaroo. And Mr B wrote 'It's cute.'
Me: Did he decide to put that?
K: Yeah.
Me: What did YOU think?
K: I think it was fairly dumb.
Me: Yeah. And he says 'it'. Was it an 'it'? (pause) An 'it' kangaroo?
K: It was a 'she' actually.
Me: Yeah, that's what I thought. Because
K: (interrupting) it's got a pouch. Can we go back and do them again? (she replays the taped discussion and looks at her writing file again)

Here we see Kylie either recalling her silent reactions to Mr B's scribings of three years earlier or renaming the feelings the moment brings up for her. Whatever her awareness was earlier, she certainly is critical now, at the age of eight, of teacher-labelling and teacher-wording. Discussing her writing (1.6.92) titled of 'Mr B is a good teacher' (1989) she says:

K: This one, I wrote 'I hate Mr B' (She's got 'I A' written at the top of the page I see now) and so he made me write 'Mr B is a good teacher' (This is written below the 'I A'. She laughs) And I did this stupid picture of him deliberately. (pause while she *silently reads 'One Day Sally Went Shopping', which I've brought in my file of her writing) What's that say? (seeing my scribble in the corner of her photocopy)*

Me: That's what Mr B said and what I said. (reading) Mr B said to me, 'If she could write the way she talks', and I said 'You mean, she'd write a lot.' And he said, 'It's a bit of a worry, getting the writing out of her. She's so slow. Good little reader though.'

K: (laughs)

Me: Was he right?

K: He USED to be. (She reads 'When I Went to Perth')

Me: (reading 'My Magic Spell') Oh this is writing where you just have to copy out something someone else has written. What do you think of that kind of writing,where you don't make up any stuff yourself?

K: (pause) Well I don't really like it, because I don't really think we should be, we should be writing out what WE think. I should have only had to do that when I was in grade Prep.

Me: So when you were in prep you couldn't write what you thought? Is that right?

K: Yeah, because I had to.

Kylie has gone through a process of change in the three years between the writing of this particular text (21.2.89) and her critical analysis (1.6.92) of it and its discursive production. In not comparing Kylie with Eve or one of the other girls, I have tried to find what it is that lets her make the moves towards agency for herself. Initially she submitted to the slight injustice of the labelling of her text: now she complains about it to me. What I wanted to know next was: could she do more than complain? In other words, what are the boundaries of her feminist consciousness? Can she subvert and change the discourses through which she is constituted? (Davies 1991)

Here is another text of Kylie's (1991), written two years after *KANGAROO*:

On Satday [Saturday] *I side* [said] *What a Butafillday* [beautiful day] *it was But When it was Lunshtime* [lunchtime] *there was a Big sdrm* [storm] *Mum told me not to go get the Wood. And I side* [said] *I haf to get the Wood Mum or you will get cold.*

This writing is, in content, unlike the writing of the published texts Kylie has come into contact with at school and at home. She is using her writing as she would use her talking, and writes just what she would say. Her audience is her teacher and the other children at the school. I am not there on the day she writes it. She tells me when she gives it to me that her mother was very cross that she went outside and got the wood in the middle of the storm. Notable in this piece of writing is the absence of men, although in Kylie's household there is a father and an older brother, along with a sister a little bit older, and a sister a lot older with a month-old baby. I suspect that the narrative is something that is wished for, and that Kylie is keen to get her mother's attention. But maybe this what actually happened, and as a young girl in the country Kylie does go out in storms and bring in wood. Reading the narrated event firstly as a fantasy may simply represent my wish to have something interesting to theorize.

It is interesting that, regardless of the reading of the story, Kylie chooses to gain attention by writing about being active, independent and caring. At school she is still the youngest girl, although this is her third year there, but she is no longer always the darling of the classroom. She sees no reason, in the narrative she tells, why she cannot as a girl get the wood. Her gendered picture of the world allows for this, although at school she appears to have had two years of being positioned by the discourses there as otherwise, when she was four and five. For example, here is some classroom dialogue from Kylie's first year at school:

(23.3.89: 2.05 pm)
Mr B: Kylie, come here sweetie.

(9.5.89)
Me: Kylie, are you doing any writing yet?
K: Nup.
Me: Why not?
K: 'Cos Mr B writes what I want.
Me: When do you think you'll be doing your own writing?
K: Oh. Mr B he writes it down.

(Nov. 89)
Notes from video filmed by Mr B of school camp. Kylie is at the top of the slide, a big boy close beside her.
Big boy: (impatiently) Come on.
K: (Silence. Big boy follows her all the way to the bottom, his feet pushing hard at her sides. She puts up with it, but as she walks away from the bottom of the slide she picks her nose and eats it.)
Mr B: (filming, later the same day) Out of the way please. (He pushes Kylie gently out of the way of the camera. A child's hand comes out and pushes her hard.)
Children: (together, in chorus, complainingly) Kylie, Kylie.
Mr B: Kylie, hop out of the way please sweetie.

What allows Kylie to write, in her third year at school, in ways that can be considered agentic? What is there that she has had contact with as discourse that allows her to see herself positively and to write accordingly? *'What a Butafillday it was'* portrays a girl battling against the elements insisting against her mother's will that she can get the wood. The central image is heroic to the point that I suspect Kylie has come across published (nineteenth century?) narratives of similar dimensions. But Kylie is a 1990's six year old in a tiny no-shop town. Has something else caused her to write like this?

It could be said that her positioning of Mr B as her scribe is an early sign of her manipulative skill, rather than a passive acceptance of herself as a non-writer. It could also be said that the constant writing she does on her arm with the texta colour is not just idle filling of time but an early instance of her resistance to the place where she is expected to write. I did not see anyone else write on themselves during my three years of visiting the school:

(9.5.89) Later I notice she's drawing a writing on her arm again. With texta.

Choosing her own skin rather than the school's writing paper may be, by this reading, a sign that she has the desire to subvert the discourses around her. Although her later writing, on the given paper, socially conforms to female stereotypes of niceness, her body writing doesn't. Maybe putting the writing on her arm allows her a possession she cannot have if she puts it on paper. Maybe this is an experiment: will the writing appear on arms as well as on paper? how does it get there? how does the texta colour work? what will it feel like? what is this sensuous stuff called skin? what are the limits to self-decoration? make-up? tatoos? where are the boundaries between the feminine and the masculine? what kind of a girl does she want to be?

Another way of Kylie becoming agentic in her writing relates to the older girls at the school and what they write about. My observation is that the girls at this school are highly conscious of each other's writing and in fact deliberately write like each other. There is an awareness amongst them that at a particular age a certain kind of writing is appropriate. This includes the content of the writing, the genre of the writing and the processes by which the writing is drafted and produced. Their awareness of writing seems to claim it as a gendered event. This is evident in the fact that the girls write about each other and that they exclude the boys from this writing and from the sharing of it. A girl will walk across the classroom to show her writing to another girl. One girl will produce a writing piece that matches in topic that of her girl friend, or follows on from where the girl friend left off. Sometimes the title of a piece of writing is almost repeated by another girl a year or so later than the original was written, as a younger girl becomes the age of the first writer at the time of the writing. I shall give data-referenced details of these observations later in this chapter.

As a writer who is able to manage the written language, Kylie, in her story about the wood, has moved into the culture of schoolgirls which Margaret's and Eve's 'L Plate Story' writing demonstrates. Kylie has seen the other girls writing as the active subjects of their narratives. She has seen that what may not be possible, yet, in life, may be possible in writing, and so she positions herself as she desires. Her subjectively is in this way actively constructed by her through what she writes. This is confirmed for her as she reads and rereads her own writing during the Interviews with me (1.6.92).

A further look at what she has written supports the idea that gendered discourses operate within the classroom, and that girl writers grapple with which sort of femininity to adopt. At Ruralsville there is evidence of many changes in the ways by which the girls write about women and girls. Similarly, their ways of presenting themselves in their writing changes over time. Here is Kylie's writing again:

I like school.
I like my home. (26.6.90)

Now she is constrained by the discourses of the school and adulthood to be one who likes, rather than one who dislikes. As an exercise in writing, Mr B has told all the younger 'children' to start their sentences with 'I like ...' Kylie diplomatically decides to conform to the image she believes is appropriate for a schoolgirl and announces that she likes the places where she spends her working time, her free time, her sleeping time, her playing time, the place where her teacher is and the place where her parents are. She could have written, in socially neutral terms, that she liked ice-cream; or in non-diplomatic terms that she liked being someone unacceptable to teachers and parents. However, she has used her writing to present herself as a good girl rather than as a naughty girl. She knows that writing can serve this particular purpose. It seems here that she perceives a binary choice, but perhaps I have imposed this dichotomy by my reading.

On a later occasion she uses her writing differently, this time to again position herself (or at least her female protagonist) agentically, as the one who takes control of the situation:

The Lion gets away.

One night a wild Lion called Tim got out of his cage and teffied [terrified] *the pepool* [people]. *Justina went to catch Tim in the morning, because TIm and Justina where* [were] *good friends.*

I shall return to my descriptions of Kylie' positionings at other points of this chapter. Before considering gender specifically, I shall first say something of Eve in relation to agency. As I construct my descriptions of the data, I am also embroidering pictures of each of the seven girls in the study. In order of age they are Kylie, Jane, Donna, Lucy, Chloe, Margaret and Eve. At the start of the research project Kylie is four and Eve is twelve. Natasha attended the school for only the first half year of the project; Zoe and Alice arrived at the school after it ended (see Appendix 4: Preliminary Descriptions).

Eve (6.6.89) constructs an expository text at the request of her teacher to write about a famous Australian. Her text can be read as an attempt at resistant writing (Rhedding-Jones and Atkinson 1991). In constructing her first draft of 'Dame Nellie Melba', Eve referred to the classroom encyclopeadias to find a suitable person to write about. Locating Melba involved rejecting the many men whose life histories she found described. The patriarchal stereotypes imposed by the encyclopedias were, by this, resisted.

However, in spite of Eve's transcriptions regarding Melba's fame and success, there is an emphasis on Melba's maternity and marriage, and this emphasis is an echoing of the published information Eve consulted. Mr B's famous person is named and described on the board: Sir Douglas Mawson, whose published biography carries no reference to his fathering or marrying. Eve told me (6.6.89) she deliberately set out to find out about a woman, although there was no discussion in the classroom about either women or male-obsessed historians. Eve had never heard of Nellie Melba before discovering the book for herself. Here are most of her selected transcriptions and paraphrasings:

Dame Nellie Melba was born Helen Porter Mitchell on 19th May 1861 in Richmond, Melbourne. Nellie loved music as a child and used to climb under the grand piano and listen to her mother play. Helen married Charles Armstrong in Brisbane.....In 1886, with her baby son, she sailed for England. She had many disappointments but .....She went to Paris and commenced lessons under Madame Marchesi who said, "At last I have found a star." She became the best known and most highly paid woman in the world. She had become a legend in her own lifetime.

In this writing text, Eve has copied her selected information out of a published book. By having done so in the ways I have described she offers feminist agency rather than passivity. Her agentic subjectivity is complex, however, as can be seen by my continued descriptions of it in the next section. In having to transcribe rather than describe, Eve follows the teacher's instructions for the day. This both limits her scope while at the same time offering her freedom. Choosing from what is already there in published text means reproducing the patriarchal discourse of femininity as maternity and marriage. Melba, on the other hand, became famous and wealthy through her own agency. Eve knows that Melba's biography is not published because of her patriarchal femininity but because of her re-inscription of femininity as wealth and fame. Singing, which was the cause of Melba's fame and wealth, is not named in this exerpt from Eve's writing. Turning again to Eve's complete text, not just the exerpt I selected from it, I see now that she wrote: *'and was immediately acclaimed a great singer'*.

The problem is mine. I wonder why I left this out of my earlier analysis. What have I perpetuated in trying to produce a piece of academic work? In disclaiming notions of humanist individualism as explanations of my own positioning, I look at what has discursively constructed my own ignoring of Melba's singing voice. Here is a woman whose fame is through the body, not via the 'body beautiful' but via the physical intellectualism of operatic music-making. In focusing on speaking/writing, I have overlooked the voice that sings. Always, another reading is round the corner.

Eve's *DAME NELLIE MELBA* represents her changing of the discourse of the classroom to the extent that a woman's fame is inserted into the line-up of famous Australians. Here Eve resists the pattern of glorifying forefathers by her finding of a foremother. As an author, Eve becomes an authority/agent of her own subjectivity's constitution of femininity as fame. By this, writing in this instance is a site for not only resistance but agentic inscription. This position which Eve has taken up is the first time I have observed her being so strongly feminist. It is the writing which has given her a place for this positioning. The pattern which she breaks is the pattern of reproducing patriarchal adulation; but she is not yet questioning the nature of fame, the positioning of those not famous, the production and the circulation of published texts.

Gender

Gender is a sociocultural construction (De Lauretis, 1990b:257). Given this positioning, I initially wanted to see how gender is constructed by/for the seven girls in the study. In deconstructing the binary of the by/for I am theorizing that both functions happen: girls' own constructions of femininity operate simultaneously with the gendered constructions they see around themselves.

Three weeks before Eve wrote the 'Nellie Melba Story', she received a secret note in school from a boy her age. The note reads:

Eve
All of
the other girls
are fuckin moles
Me

The existence of the note serves to remind Eve of her place in society as a female, and of her potential for the boys around her. Eve gives me a copy of the note on condition that I don't show it to Mr B as it has a swear word in it.

(16.5.89)
Me: Can I show it to some people you don't know?
Eve: Well all right.
Me: Do you girls write notes like this?
Eve: Oh no. We just get them.

Here the boy who wrote the note positions Eve very differently from the way she positioned herself as the writer of the 'Melba Story'. From a focus on fame and wealth, Eve must now focus on her complex position of being an object for a boy. One reading of this note and how it positions her is that she can be pleased not to be lumped together with all the other girls scorned by the writer. Another reading is that the word 'fuck' operates to imply (her?) sexual penetration even though it refers directly to the other girls. By this reading, fucking itself is also degraded as this is what the other not-desired girls do. Of course, in real life these girls are 'children' and sexual activity is supposedly adult. The boy writer thus places all of the girls and himself into the category of adults in advance of their ages. By indirectly telling Eve that he likes her, he positions her as against the others and so available to be on the same side as he is. By removing her from the 'fucking moles' he suggests that she will choose him rather than be one. The poetic layout of the note has a centuries-old history of billet-doux, rhyming couplets, courtly love etc. Where has this boy picked up his models? The television set? The 150 years of schoolboy culture secretly passed down from one Ruralsville boy to the next?

The following is a note given to Donna by Brett, (16.5.89):

Dear Donna.
I love you because I reckon you look good.
Do you like me.
from Brett.

The Chronology for this day provides contextual information for the event:

Brett: (politely and quietly beside me as Mr B reads aloud the witch story) Excuse me. How do you spell "reckon"?

Me: What?

Brett: How do you spell "reckon"? (I see now that he's got a small jotter with "Dear Donna, I love you because I r..." written on it.)

Me: I'll write it down for you. (He has no worries about passing me his jotter. I expect him to want to conceal his writing. I go to write it upside down to preserve his privacy.)

Brett: No, here. (turns the jotter right way up) It'll save me copying it out. (though I was trying to put into practice the idea that we learn to spell by looking. Oh well. I write "reckon" and he shows it to the three boys sitting near him. Four girls sit in front of them. Donna's right in the front row of the four desks. I wait to see what he does with the note. He spends a long time decorating it with textas. Adds, "because you look good. Do you like me." No question mark.)

These pieces of note-writing go against the established rules of the classroom. In school, the understood rule is that the writing produced there will be according to the educational agenda of the teacher. Note writers ignore this rule, writing what they want to write, and using their writing for their own purposes. Brett is aware that writing must have an audience: in fact, he hands his writing to his audience immediately it is completed. He also has another audience: a group of admiring and encouraging male friends. The writer and the recipient of this piece of writing are both aged about eight. In response to being written the note, Donna in fact did nothing but put it amongst her collection. By being passive she rejected the opportunity to act resistantly herself. Allowing Brett to be the prime actor in this little scenario put her in a position she may not have wanted to be in. Writing can be seen to be a gendered event taking place within the gendered site of the school.

This shaping happens daily in school as boys and girls position each other in particular ways as preliminaries to compulsory heterosexuality. Biology thus becomes confused with gender, which is discursively constituted as the same thing. Organizing social activity so that the binaries of male/female are replicated in notions of masculinity/femininity is evident in my earlier reading of the following text of Kylie's, with Mr B's sub-script below saying 'It's cute':

I am a kangaroo.
I bounce and I jump.
I eat grass.

The transcript of a later discussion of this includes:

Me: Yeah. And he says 'it'. Was it an 'it'? (pause) *An 'it' kangaroo?*
K: It was a 'she' actually.
Me: Yeah, that's what I thought. Because
K: (interrupting) *it's got a pouch.*

Looking at this now, I can see that another reading of our conversation is that I tried to force Kylie to differentiate between what is male and what is female. For her, the use of the gender-neutral pronoun may simply have meant that gender didn't matter. In this way her understanding was much more sophisticated than mine. What I tried to do in the conversation was to highlight femininity: by the assumption of 'itness' the existence of the feminine disappears into the generic. Kylie, at the end of the segment, continues to call the kangaroo 'it' despite our talk. Maybe the replacement of the masculine/feminine linguistic choice by a gender-neutral pronoun is preferable (in the same way that eliminating marriage-specific titles for women downplays the discourse of marriage-for-women). In this way I am attempting radical (poststructuralist) reflection on my own interpretative frames (Lather 1991a:13).

The research problem of what to do about gendered discourses cannot be dealt with unless the conversations and physicalities of the events of writing are considered in conjunction with the textual products. That Kylie remembers the event of the production of *KANGAROO STORY* is shown by the Interviews. As an entry into the world of the literate, she tells her teacher to write for her, 'I am a kangaroo', and proceeds to say what she, as a kangaroo, can do. A further reading of her text, without reference to the discursive data of the Chronology, is that Kylie makes the kangaroo active as a bouncer, a jumper and an eater. What her teacher does, rather than add to her positive knowledge of what kangaroos can do for themselves, is to give her kangaroo a label according to its/her looks. In this way Mr B positions Kylie as a girl whose femininity is constructed not through factual knowledge but through the way that she looks. Positioning the body as more important in the binary of body/mind reads as a subtle strategy of phallocentrism.

What can Kylie do to subvert this? Perhaps her attempt to write 'I hate ...'? Rage alone, though, will not enable agency. I shall again read Kylie's earliest text: (a practical reason for focussing on it ~~is~~ its brevity.)

I am a kangaroo.
I bounce and I jump.
I eat grass.
[Mr B has added 'It's nice'.]

In grammatical terms Kylie produces three verbs: her kangaroo bounces, jumps and eats. Mr B produces an adjective: he makes her kangaroo nice. The adjectival form of language, not the verbal, has the effect of reducing the kangaroo's state to how it appears to the outside gaze: a problem for women within patriarchy. The verbal form of language gives the kangaroo agency: she can do things, look after herself. In these ways Kylie's writing is agentic and Mr B's addition is stopping that agency. Kylie is not concerned with whether the kangaroo is nice or not; Mr B is not concerned with what the kangaroo can do. If Mr B's writing refers not to the kangaroo of her writing but to the kangaroo of her drawing, why didn't he write about the joey in the pouch? This is what Kylie has missing from her written text, presumably because she has had enough of dictating her writing, but maybe because she prefers to put the most important meaning out of the words and into the graphics. As she cannot yet be independent as a writer and as she is independent as a drawer, this may have other implications. In drawing a sex-specific sign of the kangaroo, Kylie may see the verbal quality of mothering as more important than bouncing, jumping and eating. That Mr B ignores this aspect of femininity may be a measure of his particular masculinity. That I am focusing on maternity may be a measure of my own historic construction of gender.

Much later, Kylie writes:

The Lion gets away.
One night a wild Lion called Tim got out of his cage and teffied [terrified] *the pepool* [people]. *Justina went to catch Tim in the morning, because TIm and Justina where* [were] *good friends.*

This can read as an attempt to change the gendered discourses of published narratives, where boys are heros who save girls in fairy tales or where women are inactive beside men who are brave. It could be read another way, however, so that the one who does the terrorizing is male and Justina's desire is to put him back in his cage. Either way, the discourses underlying the story appear to be gendered. The introduction of the notion of desire, however, leads into the psychoanalytic readings that come later in this chapter. The content of the girls' writing shows that gender is constructed analytically by the production/products of their texts. Deconstructing the division between product and production allows for readings of gendered subjectivity as event and site.

Subjectivity

Discursive practices provide subject positions which the girls take up, discard, change, question, ignore and exaggerate. The frames of reference by which the girls constitute their positions are themselves socially constructed, as are my own. De Lauretis (1990a) theorizes a series of displacements and transformations. I am saying that girls-who-write narrate themselves into and out of a range of positions. In this way I follow Weedon's (1987:31) suggestion that the imaginary quality of identification with subject positions is what allows this to eventuate. The following was written by Margaret, then aged eleven, in 1989:

THE DAY JEANETTE TRIED TO GET HER L PLATES
Mum could you drive me down to the R.T.A.?
"OK." "Let's go."
"Mum now I don't think I want to go."
"Don't be a chicken."
I went down the path.
"I would like to get my licence please."
"OK" "What's your name?"
Jeanette Wooly
"Hop in the car."
How do I start it? Don't you know?
"No"
"Turn the key"
Broom Broom
"Put your foot on the clutch and put it in the first gear."
"Where is that?"
Reve it up and a bit more
BRAKE BRAKE
BANG "You idiot, you made me hit my head"
"You tld me to hit the brake"
"We'll go out on the road"

"OK"
"Go out the gate" BANG
"Now look what you have done to the gate. Stop swerving all over the road."
"I can't help it"
"Let's go back to the R.T.A."
"Well jeanette you have not passed the standard to get your L plates."
"Try next year when I am retired and the next person will have to put up with you."
"Can I use your phone to ring Mum to pick me up"
"yes"
"Ring Ring"
Mum can you pick me up?
"Why didn't you get your L plates?"
"Well I will tell you in the car."

This writing is complex in terms how Margaret positions herself. The title announces that I am the target for her narrative. (I am the Jeanette of her story. I asked the girls to call me by my first name from the very beginning of the project, and they did, though this was against their experiences of addressing adults of my age, especially at school.) By positioning me as an incompetent learner driver Margaret asserts herself as my superior. However, after a few lines of reading what she has written it seems that I am also the 'I' of her story. And the 'I' of the story is a child with a mother like Margaret's own. Between the title and the episodes, Jeanette seems to have become Margaret. I am still there though, as she uses my name twice more, and with the derogatory surname of 'Wooly' added to it. (Didn't four year old Kylie write of a 'wild woolly child' that same year? Maybe it's not derogatory. Maybe it relates to my then-permed hair.)

What am I to make of Margaret's positioning of myself/herself? Additionally, her realistic dialogue between 'Jeanette', the mother and the driving examiner locates the I/Jeanette as childish/stupid. This linking of childishness and stupidity seems to have been necessary if 'I' am to be positioned as Margaret desires. I decided at the time that the girls had had enough of me hanging about their school and spying on them (this compares to Jones 1991). Putting me down through their writing was a clever way to place me and my research project in the rubbish bin, I thought.

It seems that Margaret recognizes some of the feminine links between herself and me. She can appear to indirectly identify herself with me and to be grappling with matters of female position: the impact of the narrative in this reading of it is that she has given herself my name. Further, by beginning and ending the narrative with the mother and daughter dialogue, she shows her awareness of the importance of this relationship. It is the mother to whom she returns and whom she leaves. It is the mother who will wait for explanations of dreadfulness at the end of the day and not insist that they be made immediately. In this reading Margaret seems to be aware of the importance of women to each other and in relationships.

Another reading is that Margaret looks at women through pre-adolescent eyes. Perhaps she derides a woman because she is not yet one herself. She is able to maintain, for a little while longer, the views of a not-yet-woman. Perhaps she is able to enjoy joining the boys in mocking the women. Perhaps this story is a facet of her then-current adoption of a patriarchal consciousness where her feminine subjectivity is in competition with other women's/girls'. The freedom to mock other females is demonstrated by the following conversation about the writing which preceded the production of her text:

(11.4.89): I see two girls sitting together on the ground, their backs against the corrugated iron bike shed, their clipboards leaning against their knees.

Margaret: (loudly, to Eve) NO! "O" "R" (She's fixing up Eve's spelling.)

Eve: (to Margaret. They seem to be looking for suitable stories to write about.) The day Mrs B Backed Into The Bike Shed. (Makes loud screech and crash noises.) And Mr B said, "That's coming out of her Expo money."

Margaret: "The Day Natasha Got Her "P" PLates And Ran Over The Dog." (They both laugh.)

The first topic denigrates the wife of the school's teacher. (She is the Mrs B in their story.) Having her back a car into the school bike shed is a measure of her incompetence as a driver, a typical patriarchal criticism of women. Eve's dramatization of the imagined action lets them both enjoy the woman's discomfort and humiliation a bit more than simply announcing a topic for their story would have done. The reference to Mr B controlling his wife's spending money is inconsistent with what I think happens regarding money at Eve's house and at Margaret's house where both mothers are in the paid work force. Likewise, it does not fit my observation of Mr B as a gentle, caring young man who runs his school with wisdom and skill. This is a gender discourse learned from published texts and television, amongst other sites.

Margaret goes one better than Eve by finding a more outrageous topic and picking on yet another female: the absent Natasha who has transferred to another school. At the time she left, Natasha was an over-average-weight grade one girl. Although five years younger than the two girls talking. Natasha strongly resisted anyone's efforts to put her in a non-dominant position (7.3.89). Now that Natasha is gone, Margaret and Eve find it is both safe and quite a deal of fun to deride her, although I never observed them doing so whilst she was at school with them.

The production of *THE DAY JEANETTE TRIED TO GET HER L PLATES* was very interesting to the other girls. A spate of reproductions of Margaret's text appeared irregularly over a period of almost five months following the original that I have reproduced here. A version of it was produced by her younger sister, Donna, at home and given to me by their mother. Two years later Jane writes about getting her licence, but there is no denigration of another person here, only an image of herself as powerful. Eve's story (17.10.89) relates directly to Margaret's. She wrote it straight onto the computer:

This story is a contuitation of Margaret's story The Day Jeanette Tried To Get Her L Plates. In Margaret's story Jeanett had a go at getting her L Plates but didn't seceed. She has had 8 goes since then and finally got her L plates. Now it is time to get a job. She said "Mum where's the paper?" In the fire. "Mum Iv'e told you not to put it in the fire until I've read it." "But you never read it Jeannett darling and I couldn't see you starting now." "Why not you have to start somewhere." Darling I think it's about time you start paying me board every week. All right you can pay me ten dollars a week instead of twelve dollars a week. "OK love I'm going to bed now goodnight" "Goodnight". "Morning Mum" "Morning Jeanette Love" "Where's the paper" "O Oh."

Although Eve intends continuing Margaret's narrative derision of me, her story ends up as a dialogue between a growing-up daughter and her mother. Jeanette remains in the daughter role, as Eve struggles with discourses of age and power. Although 'Jeanette' has eight tries at getting her licence before being successful, the story is told lovingly.

Traditionally, it is unacceptable to discourses of schooling that students in primary schools write about the adults there, especially by using their first names. What Margaret began was on the edge of acceptability. At the time, Mr B. seemed to be unsure of how to treat the writing. He knew the girls were acting subversively but what they had done was not outside their given bounds. What I did by being peculiarly non-authorative at the school disrupted the usual givens of the situation:

(9.5.89): 1.30 pm. As I arrive Mr B has the whole school facing him and in their desks. Apart from Margaret, who's beside him looking awkward.

Mr B (to me) Does this story meet with your approval? (Margaret seems about to read to the school her story, "The Day Jeanette Tried To Get Her L Plates.")

Me: Oh, I don't know about that. (Then he reads aloud Margaret's story. All the kids had listened avidly to our dialogue, though no-one asked me what I meant and I'd been deliberately evasive. They all look round at me and grin as Mr B reads.)

Here my role as researcher is not yet clear to Mr B, who still sees me as some kind of school teacher who must necessarily disapprove of childish insubordination. The girls and boys, however, in this first half year of the research, already know that I have positioned myself as lacking in power. Their enjoyment of the reading aloud of the 'L Plate Story' is a measure of this. But why did Mr B read the story aloud, and not Margaret herself? Immediately after this episode a boy writer presents his story without Mr B's reading intervention. In reducing Margaret to a silent onlooker of her own text, Mr B could be read as joining the girls in mocking me. In not reading Shane's story aloud also, Mr B gives the boy the right to be heard as his own speaker. Here is an extract from Shane's text:

then Jane and all the girls fainted ... Jane and the girls got taken to Ruralsville Primary School to recover from the shock

Here Shane positions all the girls together as weak. This is contrary to the girls' positioning of themselves through their writing of the L PLATE series. Here they speak authoritively about becoming a licensed driver and getting a job, and in some of the stories they position an adult as having less knowledge/power than they do. In this way the girls engage in a discursive practice which they have devised as a solution to the problems of the prying woman and the boyish put-downs. Transcripts of the conversation before Margaret wrote her first draft show they were looking for a target. I was the third target they discussed: first they picked on the wife of their teacher and next a girl who had left the school. In each instances the target was female. Why was there no desire to position a man or a boy in this way? Who is absent from what they wrote?

Three years after the original writing event, I discussed it with Eve as she sat with a tape recorder in my office:

(2.4.92)

Me: What was the name of that girl who left? In grade two? (pause) *She had flaming red hair.*

E: Oh, Natasha.

Me: Well as soon as she left you got yourselves all set up to write about her. You were going to pick on her, with a story.

E: Oh yes. (laughs loudly) I remember hating her.

Me: But you were so much bigger. There were these two big strong powerful grade six girls, and they picked on this little girl in grade two.

E: That's what happens. I still do it. I mean, I don't write about it. But I, I pick at (indistinct)

Me: Yeah.

E: I call the year sevens "scum". You just keep it on. You do.

Me: Yeah. It's a power game.

E: Yeah.

Me: And after that you were going to write about Mr B's wife.

E: Yeah?

Me: Yeah. I've got this on tape.

E: Yeah, she was always going on about ... and we used to think she shouldn't do that, and there was that time she knocked into the bike shed.

Me: Oh, that really happened?

E: Oh yeah, and Mr B said he'd have to make her pay for it out of her Expo money.

Me: Oh I thought you made that up. I've got that in my notes. That was the year after Expo. So it really happened? You were reliving the great moment.

E: Yeah. We all thought it was really good. We all thought it was great, what he said to her. (pause) I can't believe how bitchy we were. We were really bitchy. (pause) That's what we're like. Whereas men just crack the shit. But up until then they they don't really show it.

Me: And after that, you suddenly thought you'd write about me.

E: Yeah. We were just totally bitchy.

Here Eve is able to analyse her own femininity, both currently and in retrospect. To some extent, what she says here challenges some of my earlier readings as a romantic feminism, where I have seen more challenge and more agency than the girls initiated. What Eve (and I) are unable to analyse is the bitchiness. Beginning the story writing sequence at the back of the school bike sheds may account for the freedom the girls had to construct a narrative scenario appropriate to their desires to be 'bitches'. On the other hand, would such self-criticism be considered by boys as masculine, or does this construction of bitchiness as gendered only apply to femininity? The binary of imposed gender ordering provides Eve (1992) with a discourse for disapproving of the femininity she now adopts. Being feminine and not liking this discursively imposed subjectivity can lead to a considered change. But within patriarchy/phallocentricism, women accuse themselves. And men

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accuse women. In the writing sequence Eve and Margaret have joined the women. How can they now construct being womanly differently?

In the deconstructions I am attempting, the process I seek to uncover is the unbecoming of women (Modleski 1990:15). In going backwards in time and trying to re-read the agencies of gendered girlish subjects I am seeking locations of disruptions to prevailing discourses. As writers, these primary school girls have freedoms to explore, alter, inscribe and dismiss. That this process counts is apparent in the ways they later talk about what the writing means to their subjective histories. Derrida's theory of the subject as an effect of writing is by this confirmed. So too is Foucault's theory of the subject as a regulatory fiction produced in and through discourse. In the next section I shall explore the idea that the positions arrived at by the girl-writers are fictitous. In poststructuralist theory, fiction and reality merge. As they do, the subject is constantly reconstituted. Through the inconsistencies of positioning, we use language to land fleetingly at various points. What we desire is thus a cause/effect of where we go next. The L PLATE sequences represent some of the rupturings of selfhood.

3: Psychoanalytic Post-Scriptions

In order to go beyond the poststructuralist readings I have so far given, I now present a series of alternative speculations regarding feminist psychoanalysis. These speculations represent a range of feminist psychoanalytic theories of desire, fantasy and metaphor. Applying these theories to the presumed understandings, constructings and desires of young girls is a risky business, I know. What I now present is a further attempt to see what the possibilities could be. For this purpose I shall be working, playing, and opening out the texts of the Writings (Appendix A), and additionally reading the discourses of the Chronology and the Interviews as they relate to the Writings. Firstly I consider four of the girls: Jane, Eve, Chloe and Kylie. Then I consider metaphors, desires and fantasies within psychoanalytic readings. Lastly, I review psychoanalytic theories.

In this chapter I re-interpret the girls' writing using some of the psychoanalytic strategies I described and discussed in Chapter 2. To do this I shall use analytic techniques of speculation. These will be based on detailed consideration, observation and attention to individuals/subjects in relation to the play of the product/process of writing. Then I shall move to my major consideration, which is the possibility in feminist re-workings of psychoanalytic theories. Here I shall be directed mostly by Walkerdine (1984a-1990).

The relationships the girls have with each other, in life and in their writing, seem to be very important. Because of the extended-family nature of a one-teacher school, there is also a strong awareness of identification with girls not of their own age. The bonding of the older girls to each other, for example Eve and Margaret (1989), and later the complexity of the Chloe/Lucy/Donna threesome (1990, 1991), is a feature of girlhood at Ruralsville. The discursively produced series of *L PLATE* stories can in this way be read as a manifestation of membership: only girls wrote *L PLATE* stories, and only girls wrote stories about the woman who came out to the school to research girls' writing.

Because the girls' writing both documents what in real life is and what in fantasy may be, it acts as a link between the internal worlds and the external worlds of the writers. In this way, what I shall look at now represents a poststructuralist dissolution of the conscious and the unconscious. What the girls write is produced through a dynamic processes of meaning making. Some of their meanings relate to their growing identities as members of a girl-group. The writing itself moves between what happens psychologically and what happens as social reality. In this way, what gets written is of particular importance. This importance is not in terms of literacy development as pedagogy, but in terms of constructings of self-hood. I shall theorize that this self-hood is not of separate subjects but of subjects constructed together.

Jane

Jane's *GOST HOUSE* story can exemplify ways the girls intrusively identify with each other. Here the writer is aged seven:

The Gost house
One day Lucy and I Where bord we went outside a Gost house was there So we went inside it was goiyt it was emty we saw a Gost and then we ran there was no way out so we just ran and ran we where going in sogls we Just ran and ran I said to Soja there is no way to outside she said I no we fell in a trap we found a pasig it was like a hall way, we we threw it. it was dake and it was loge we where back from when we sarte from this time we went the difrnt way so we wod no go in the trap we did not see the Gost it got darck we jast went wocking it was sill dack and qiyt I said to Lucy I no there is a Gost haer woching us There it is we said together this time we chast the Gost it was not a Gost it was a person he prest a butn we went in to a hall a man put us in a cach he did't tack the key when he was gon we opend it and went out we went into a room Lucy said look haer there was a botl it said machik mederson we took it with us I said we wont to go home the

machik mederson will do it we said together but it did't tack us home I said to Lucy it cood mack the door so we can go home.

One of the positions taken here by Jane as the teller/protagonist is close collaboration with Lucy. As is the practice at Ruralsville, she writes using her real name and those of her friends, thus collapsing the differences between narrator/narrated, realism/fantasy, self/story. Jane's position with Lucy, who in real life is one year older and the close friend of Chloe, is one of an equal, with neither girl having more power than the other in the narrated situation. In real life, Jane plays and works by herself much more than any of the other girls do. In ***THE GOST HOUSE***, she takes the initiative: she is the one who announces that there is no way outside, that the ghost is watching them and that the magic medicine could transform the door so that they can go home. Togetherness is typified by the sentence both girls say together in chorus at the end of the narrative. Here it is not what they say that counts but the unison in the saying.

Another position taken by Jane in this text is that of girls relation to men. It is quite clear that the ghost is to be feared. Although the two girls took the initiative in the first place and ventured inside the quiet ghost house together, they run and run in order to escape. The running is described in graphic detail so that a reader senses the fear and the hopelessness of the running. The ghost, who turns out to be a man, puts the girls into a cage. Not stopped by this, the girls escape to find the magic medicine that provides them at last with the safety of home. The man thought to be the ghost frightens the girls, but they outsmart him, possibly because there are two of them.

The self that Jane constructs by producing this writing is one which values collaboration with another girl, which allows her to take initiatives, and is wary of men. These themes recur in Jane's writing over the three year period. Other writing themes for Jane include her real-life experiences of friendship with boys, family life, school, Easter, Christmas and travelling in South-East Asia. The fantasy-life coming through Jane's writing either involves imaginary animals or being older, although her real-life themes often erupt into fantasy. Here Jane is representative of the Ruralsville girls, all of whose writing follows some patterning of fantasy and reality.

The following represent some reading possibilities in Jane's fantasy writing throughout the three years of 1989 to 1991, when she was aged between seven and ten. Here I deal with the fantasy texts she produced and gave to me. Because the data of the Appendices is discourse-bound I can now begin to put them together as a textual re(-)creation. There are ten of these texts.

In *THE DAY THE SCHOOL BURNT DOWN* the man-teacher with the hose is the one who puts out the fire. Squirting the school himself, rather than calling in the professionals, indicates his power.

On Monday I went to School. It was play time Mr B was macking some Coffee. There was a burning smell The School was on fire. We all ran out. Mr B put the the hose on and squirted the School.

In *SANTA ON HOLIDAY* Jane shouts at the wife who slams a door in her face, but sweetly asks the husband for a ride in his sleigh. And gets what she wants.

I saw Santa's house. I knocked on the door. Mrs. Claws opened the door. I said "Hi" to her. "Where is Santa"? I asked. She said "He was on holiday"s. "Its Christmas. I shouted She said nothing and slammed the door. I started to walk away. then I saw Santa in his slay with his reindeer It landed on the snow "Hi Santa" I said "Could I have a ride in your slay?" "Yes". He said.

In *US*, Jane is enabled to be part of the friendship duo of Chloe and Lucy by killing off Donna, presumably her rival and the school scapegoat.

Today I'm packing my sluff to go to the PHILIPPINES with Lucy, Chloe and Donna. The next day we went to the Airport When we got there we had a crash landing BUT... everyone was okay...The next day we went to the beach and Donna got drowned in money. We got all the money and she was dead.

In *ROTTON APPLES ON TOAST*, Jane's boy protagonist gets what he deserves from eating the worms he finds, whilst the girl protagonist and her mother wisely avoid the worms.

"Whats this" said Melissa
"Toast" he said
"MORE LIKE WORMS ON TOAST" Melissa and Mum said. Tom started to eat
"mmmmmmmm" he said
"Yuk" they said. Tom packed his lunch box with worms ... For tea they had roast chicken but Tom had worms. The next day Tom did'nt get out of bed. Melissa went into his room

"Whats wrong?" she said.
"I feel sick" he said.

In *THE DAY I TURNED 21*, Jane is surrounded by her girl-friends, gives some of her money away to the poor, is the named star of a movie, is rich and famous and travels to Mars.

Donna brought some popcorn. Then Lucy came then Erin and Jessy and everyone was here. Erin and Jessy gave me a horse and Donna gave me a car and Chloe and Lucy gave me a horse too... We had so much money that we had nearly all the money in the world. We gave some money to the poor people so that they could live. But they gave it back and the bank gave us money. I am the best in the world because everyone said so. So did I... Then I was the most famous person in the world. So I went to Mars and met some martians.

In *THE SAVAGE SALAD*, a magic carrot insists that her Dad withdraw his threat of no pocket money for the rest of the year.

"Not salad again Mum" I moaned
"Eat it up Lisa or you'll have no tea".
I picked the smallest piece of carrot and it bit me
"Ouch! That piece of carrot bit me
"Don't tell jokes Lisa" dad said in a stern voice as he took the biggest tomato he could find. He munched and munched.
"The best tomato I've ever tasted honey" dad said
"Lisa seeing you have lied you gets no more pocket money for the rest of the year".
"Dad, but its only January the first - 364 days to go".
"That not fair" said something.
"Lisa don't answer back"
"I didnt"
Out of the salad came a carrot. He looked like this. He said "Give Lisa back her pocket money" "OK said Dad
Then the carrot ran away. Since then we have never eaten salad again. Wonder why?

In *DON'T FORGET TO FEED THE DINOSAUR* Jane resolves the problem of constantly having to feed a dinosaur that threatens to eat the house by selling the dinosaur and buying a new house.

I've got a dinosaur. I have to feed him every night because he will eat our house...I am serpos [supposed] *to be home at 6:30 because I have to feed the dinosaur. I ran home but I was too late the diñosaur ate a chop out of our house. Next morning we sold our dinosaur for $1,000 and some builders came and fixed our house but it did'nt look good... Then we buidt a new house.*

In *MAGIC BOOTS*, Brett plans to trick the judge and win the race, but the boots' magic has disappeared and Brett is beaten by Tim.

Brett was going to wear the magic boots in the race he was going to cheat with the magic boots...The Judge said "redy, set GO"... Anthony ran as fast as he could and Brett just walked because he had the magic boots on but they wernt working. Brett slarted to run but Anthony had won already. Just go's to shows cheats never win.

In *THE DAY I GOT MY LICENCE* and in *RURLASVILLE CUP*, Jane drives her own car and rides the winning horse.

I am nineteen so I am getting my licence and I'm getting it Today. So off I go to get a car. I got a black limo.

I rode the winner I started off coming last and then I won.

In *SUPER DONNA*, which features all of the girls at the Ruralsville school and two others, Donna finally teaches Jane to fly.

I fell off a clif Suddenly Donna caught me. It was Super Donna. Then she dropped me in the roof of the Hospital and I fell in a bed... I told every one and they didnt believe [me]. *One day I saw Super Donna... Then she taught me how to fly.*

Here then are repeated images of worldly success, of female friendships and of victory over threatening males. Beginning and developing literacy, for Jane, can be seen to be psycho-sexual in her uses of the phallic symbolisms of the hose held by Mr B in her early story, and the talking carrot she devises to defeat her father in her later one. For me though, the images of flying, of boys being sick or losing races, and of an older Jane who gives away her money, are stronger. Jane's writing enables her to take a stance that appears to be not possible in her everyday life at the time of her writing. Becoming a writer, for Jane, opens new doors to meaning making.

The Chronology can place Jane's writing against what she was saying and doing in school at the time. In 1989 she makes sure her writing is private by concealing it with her body. Similarly, she refuses me permission to take her photograph, although she takes mine. She spends a lot of time gazing into space and watching the other girls and boys, sometimes fiddling with bits of wool she finds on the floor, or decorating her stories with texta. Most of the time she is silent. I keep forgetting to write anything about her in my notes. Lucy, who is central to the girls' friendship patterns, rejects her. When Jane plays outside, she plays by herself. In 1990, she is careful and slow with her writing, still silent and playing alone. By 1991, she takes more initiatives in the classroom and values her writing, though still quietly her own person. Quite often she is with Donna.

The positions Jane takes regarding her subjectivity are, in her fantasy writing, more exaggerated than in her life. It appears that Jane's writing allows her to try being a series of selves not yet available to her in 'real' life. If fantasy in writing can be seen as the workings of the internal mind, then this splitting, or the rendering of the self into parts, should be a characteristic of it, according to psychoanalytic theory. Jane's writing presents various versions of herself: from the girl who swims with Matthew in the dam, (6.11.89) to the girl who gets all the money from her dead girl-friend (in *US*), to the girl whose Mum gives her new shoes and pants, (1.5.90), to the girl who takes the Martians to Earth, (1991). What Jane's writing shows is that her various subject positions, in different relationships and situations, oscillate between each other without becoming fixed. Over time though, Jane moves from self-erasure to confidence. Here is the first piece of writing she gave me:

30-5-89
my frienD plays with me and her name is emma I Like her she is my bess frienD I play with her all the time and I have got maer frienDs but emma is my bess frienD and I play with sam and I play with emma and I have tow frienD and I Like sam and emma

At this stage in her writing Jane produces very little in terms of quantity. What she writes is factual and strictly based on what happened in her life. After her trip to the Philippines she narrates with greater drama because of her experiences.

Monday 10th September.
Today I have come back to school. On my holiday where was an earth quake. It was 7.7 and the house we where staying in split in two.

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Her first imiginative piece is prompted by Mr B, who asked his students to write on a particular topic. Jane produces

THE DAY THE SCHOOL BURNT DOWN, and similarly a story about Christmas: *SANTA ON HOLIDAY*. Although the previous presentation of Jane's writing was in chronological order, the foregoing deconstructions ignored their ordering over time. By picking up on production sequence, Jane may be able to be seen not only developing as a literate subject but as a feminine subject. At the beginning of the second year of the study, she copied:

It is Tuesday February 20th. Today our School received a new Victorian flag from Mr Roger Hallam.

Her next fantasy piece was US, followed by *ROTTON APPLES ON TOAST* and *THE DAY I TURNED 21*. By this stage she has established herself as a writer who can entertain her reading audience, although I am reading her as also being aware of gender differences and how to get what she wants. By year three of the study she produces the quite sophisticated narrative of *THE SAVAGE SALAD*, with its talking carrot defying the father. She continues to devise her own fantasy topics without relying on Mr B's suggestions or copying the topics of the other girls. In this way she produces *MY PET ALLIGATOR*, *THE GOST HOUSE* and *DON'T FORGET TO FEED THE DINOSAUR*. It seems that Donna and Lucy's haunted house stories may have developed from Jane's *GOST HOUSE*, although I cannot be certain of this. *SLUMBER PARTY* and *THE DAY I GOT MY LICENCE* and *THE RURALSVILLE CUP* relate to the dynamics of the classroom, as Jane further interweaves her fantasies with the positionings of her friends.

SUPER DONNA, with its final image of flying is the last piece she gave me for the corpus of her writing. The question I ask is: could this apparent shift towards self-confidence and imaginative exploration happen in the same way without the freedom Jane's particular story writing practice gave her?

What I have done presents a reading of themes, settings and metaphors. This allows for playing the texts of fantasy in ways that texts of real-life events cannot allow. It therefore involves reading non-expository and non-report texts in ways different from the reading of fact genres. Taking only fantasy texts, these metaphors for Jane are the hose, the door, drowning, a house, money, a taxi, worms, a carrot, a skateboard, a ghost, medicine, a dinosaur, a shark, boots, a car, a horse and flying. How she arrives at these metaphors is unclear. In the Interviews (1.6.92) I tried to find out how they function for her, but I was not successful. This may have been because I failed to ask her the best questions. I see now that I only asked her about the 'facts', not about how she came by the metaphors. When I hinted about dreams Jane said, 'I just made that one up.'

The psychoanalytic theory, that the language actions performed on the external world project meanings from the internal world, appears to be born out by Jane's metaphoric writing. This writing can be seen as communicative action on the external world, and a mode of thought or symbolic action on her internal world. Differentiation into internals and externals is a dichotomy which poststructuralism seeks to avoid. So, it seems, does Jane, who frequently combines her fantasy writing with her real-life descriptions of fact.

Eve

Eve, aged eleven, records her real-life self in her daily diary (1989):

Thursday 10th August
Last night I had pasta for tea. Next week I have to have a bloodtest.
Friday the 11th August
Last night my night was wreacked by maths I had to do.

In contrast, she switches, during story writing time, to the genre of the popular romance novel to produce *DYEING LOVE*. In this lengthy story she identifies herself as a twosome: she names herself as the author complete with surname at the start of her writing; and she writes 'that's me' in brackets after naming her eighteen year old protagonist. In these ways she acknowledges the duality of her positioning. She is both the writer and the written about:

"There Mike is again" murmed Kate. (thats me)" I know isnt he cute" said Fiona. He's looking this way turn away act normal they both whispered. He's looking at Andrea again, he always looks at her, did you see him looking at her all through science class this morning. Whats so special about her. She's just as pretty as us. Come on lets go outside now O.K. I've finished. What do you want to do? talk I spose. lets compare each other O.K. Andrea first: brown straight hair, brown eyes, Average height ears pierced, twice.

Here Eve presents herself in fantasy as she sees older girls either in reality, on television or in books:

Let's go on to the basket ball court and watch the boys playing if there out of the cafeateria and stopped looking at Andrea yet. We went down there and there was nobody there so we deicied to go down to the oval and talk

Here is girlish friendship, preoccupation with looks, passivity regarding boys. However, Eve's narrative twists in another direction as she struggles with inconsistent identities and her own physical skill:

we just got there and a football came straight for us I caught it and someone grabbed me from behind and tackled the ball off me as I got free. I turned around and there was Mike, at that moment I think I went red afterwards Fiona told me I looked like my face was going to explode Mike just said hi and walked away.

Being able to catch a football became problematic for Eve's narrative until she resolved it by the romantic blush of heterosexual encounter. Later in the story Eve must again deal with her own competence at home and her positive approach to school:

Ever since dad walked out mum after work just drinks herself silly and then comes home sick. I put her to bed and went to bed myself. I felt too tired to go to school in the morning but I still went.

She returns to the romance element, but her scorn for boys intervenes:

I turned around there was Mike smiling as always I was very susprised [surprised]. *Hi I said, Hi he said I turned back around he said he was the one ringing me he didn't have the guts to talk to me.*

After a series of episodes she resolves her narrative with:

Me and FIONA are still friends I'm a waitress part time and I go to an acting school the rest of the time. FIONA well she's a full time cook at the resturant I wait at. Andrea and Mike have bought a flat and now are living together.

Seeing an alternative to living-together mixed-sex bliss, she counters this with:

Me and Fiona bought a house, yes our first house it was about a month ago. its number 72 and it's painted white. It has about 5 trees out front Jassmen [jasmine] *and ivy are intwined and weaved all along the fence.*

After this the story continues with Andrea escaping from the unfaithful Mike:

Andrea was crying. come in I said she sobbed out thankyou. Whats wrong? we had a fight she sobbed again. What about? another girl Oh I said hear you are grab a tissue and you can help us. thankyou she sobbed. Fiona and Andrea finished the cooking while I had a shower

Placing herself as the one in command of the situation, Eve practises in writing what she may well do one day in life. The narrative, however, continues:

The doorbell rang and there was Mike.
Andrea and Mike went into the bedroom and came out smiling.

The happy reconciliation of Andrea and Mike is not the end of the story, however. The conclusion is that Mike eventually leaves Andrea and goes out with Eve/Kate. Here, then is Eve's ultimate success: she has managed to catch a man:

Bring Bring Bring Bring Hello pause year pause who is this pause oh pause um pause are you sure? pause why don't you go with Andrea pause year um pause sorry sure I'd love to go pause year that would be fine pause pick me up in half an hour.

Here is a story of the complexities of girlhood and of imagined times to come. Eve here is six years younger than the protagonist she writes of. If Jane's writing of *GOST HOUSE* seems to be influenced by the tellers of Hansel and Gretel, the Three Bears and ghost stories around the camp fire, then Eve's must be seen as having its genesis in the genre of the Mills and Boon, Sweet Dreams sagas. Both writers have internalized the style of writing they wished to produce, complete with its rhythms, its characteristic wording, its sequencing of events and the timing of each episode. That femininity, in various guises, is emerging through the writings of these two girls is apparent though the positions are different. The togetherness of girl friends in each story is a marked feature. Eve shows what she thinks can happen to girls older than she is, and of how what happens today links to what happens tomorrow. As a precocious constructor of popular romance fiction, Eve appears to be aware of its critiques and its potential for subversion. Being able to write as she does by the age of eleven is a demonstration of her then-current understandings of gender, genre and humour.

The sanctioning and resolving of goodness and badness and niceness and naughtiness, through fantasy writing and through daily living, is important to the construction of the feminine. These girls' texts are not simple retellings of what in fact is. Rather, they indicate what in fantasy or in the unconscious may be. Seen in this way, the writing of meanings provides resources for gender resolutions. As a cultural product of primary school girls, writing serves and produces the writers. Psychoanalytic readings can explain how girls become feminine by internalizing and identifying with female positions. Being free to produce such writing, as the Ruralsville girls were, allowed them to construct a range of gendered subjectivities in advance of actuality. For these girls, femininities and feminisms were able to be experimented with through the narrative fantasies of the cultural production of their writing.

Further, this production itself produces and resolves desires (Walkerdine 1984:181). Eve's story contains a number of desire resolutions, as does Jane's. Walkerdine theorizes that the relationship between the resolution of desire, and what happens and is produced culturally, is struggled over by the girl: her life becomes a psychic and a material struggle. This struggle and these desires are there and able to be read in these girls' writings. One of the functions of this kind of writing is that it allows for experimentation with desire. It operates as a kind of verbal dress-up box of adult clothes. It is clear that the clothes Eve, Jane and the other girls try on are feminine. Identifying with women and with older girls happens constantly throughout their schooling:

(Video, Nov. 1989)
Eve sits by herself on the railing. Miss Y and the mother are talking beside the barbecue. Margaret is with them, listening. She is their height.

Here Margaret, aged twelve, has chosen to listen to the women's conversation rather than play with the boys or the girls. By physically looking womanly, Margaret appears not out of place here, at the school camp with the women. Listening is her way of learning the genres of womanly chat and eventually inserting herself into their discourses. Eve already has some of the discursive skills, as is apparent in her classroom dialogue with Miss Y and me in the classroom (7.12.89)

Eve: (standing behind Miss Y again. She is the taller of the two. I can't hear what they're saying. She walks back to me) You know I called my story "Dying Love". Well Miss Y said to call it that.

Miss Y: (loudly, from across the room, to me) I thought she meant LOVE was going to die. (Eve, Miss Y and I laugh.)

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Eve: But I meant HE would. (It's a joke we share. To me, she says, soto voce) I was going to have Kate get pregnant and then have him die before it got born. (sharply) What's the matter? You're not laughing.Miss Y thought it was very funny. –

Me: (seriously) Well sometimes it happens. (Eve walks away and goes back to her writing.)

Here Eve cannot resolve the difference in feminine positioning between Miss Y and me. Our different reactions to the proposed pregnancy resolution of Eve's protagonist is the result our own differing life experiences. This is beyond eleven year old Eve, who saw killing off the hero of her story before the birth of his child as simply a clever ending to her narrative. The reason why she did not write this ending is probably her idea of school ethics. The fact that she intended it is important to a theory of desire, subjectivity and girlhood. Here I need to quote from Eve's story to support what I say:

DYEING LOVE by Eve Grant
"There Mike is again" murmed Kate. (thats me)" I know isnt he cute" said FIONA. He's looking this way turn away act normal they both whispered. He's looking at Andrea again, he always looks at her, did you see him looking at her all through science class this morning. Whats so special about her.

In case her readers haven't got the fact that Kate is herself, Eve procedes to describe her own looks. And she describes the way she looks in the mirror:

Kate: black curley hair, green eyes, Avarage height, ears pierced, twice.

Having done this, though, she then drops the third person naming and switches to a first-person 'I':

I turned around and there was Mike, at that moment I think I went red afterwards FIONA told me I looked like my face was going to explode Mike just said hi and walked away...When I got home I got five prank calls from someone misterous. It was someone from school I think when I picked up the phone and said hello I just got hung up on.

The narrative continues until at last Mike does what Kate/Eve wanted:

after about 20 minutes someone walked up behind me and said Hi I turned around there was Mike smiling as always I was very susprised. Hi I said, Hi he said I turned back around he said he was the one ringing me he didn't have the guts to talk to me.

After this Kate/Eve encounters the 'other' woman:

We got up started walking back to the basketball court as soon as we got there Andrea ran up to Mike and Mike flung his arms around her, and I walked over to FIONA.Mike and Andrea walked off together I was confused I thought Well he rang me I don't know why but he came up to the oval to get me I wonder why but it was plain to me and FIONA he was in love with Andrea.

When I put together the text of *DYEING LOVE* with what was said in the classroom later about it (7.12.89), it seems that at this point in the writing Eve considered the possibility of Kate/Eve's pregnancy and Mike's unexpected death before childbirth. For me, this resolution is too stunningly awful, but Miss Y laughs. Having to reject the pregnancy/death resolution, Eve the writer places a gap in her narrative:

Four years later ... me and Fiona are still friends. I'm a waitress part time...

In psychoanalytic terms, what could all this mean? Certainly Eve is 'fashioning' her femininity (Gilbert and Taylor 1991), but does writing within the particular confines of the romance genre imprison or perpetrate her desires? (Bulbeck 1991:19) It seems to me that Eve is conscious of what she is dealing with in her writing; what she cannot understand is my lack of laughter. This puzzlement, I suspect, potentially functions as access to a new discourse. The discourse I have confronted her with is not the feminist discourse that appears to engage Miss Y. Eve senses that I have a different view. My response regarding what can happen to women in patriarchy is a key to something else. Here I am not sure whether Eve interprets my silence as not laughing at someone dying, or whether she is re-thinking my flippancy and feminism. In fact, how the girls were constructing me, in terms of my non-teacher status at their school, is an issue mostly unexplored by this dissertation.

For me, the door that opens on to my next reading of the scenario is unlocked by my own inscribing of the split binary of 'pregnancy/death'. What has made me do this? Is this still a reading of what Eve wrote or is it a reading of what I wrote? Why have I focussed on Eve's juxtapositioning of Kate's pregnancy and Mike's death? Is a death-of-a-man metaphor the same as a sexed production of a child? Deconstructing the dichotomy of male/female reproduction roles uncovers a mass of discursive histories for lovers. Eve's questioning of her own future with its potential for single-parent mothering is abandoned for discourses of romantic desire. Miss Y's assumption, that *DYEING LOVE* meant the death of the love, represents a less dramatic event than Eve imagines. But my own fragmented subjectivity encompasses these dimensions of femininity also. I am both Eve and Miss Y as well as myself.

For Eve, writing sometimes has a relationship to dreaming, (Interviews, 2.4.92):

E: I've lost my dreams. (pause) I used to have them. Heaps of them. But now I don't. And some of them were, oh I used to wake up and feel 'Jo-Anne's dead.' I used to have that dream. I know when things are dead. Honestly. After one of our holidays, I dreamed that my calf was dead, and I thought no that's probably stupid. But it WAS. I used to have a cat dream, where the cat was dead.

Me: That didn't come through any of your writing.

E: No.

Me: Did you write about that in your diary then at home?

E: How did you know I had a diary?

Me: You told me. You said it was a secret.

E: Oh. When I think about it. an accident or something terrible, it's there. Like the one with the picture (in year 7), like how she kills herself, she takes the drugs. And this one, where the building falls, that's a dream I had, when I was little, that the building fell on my legs. (she finds and then reads 'The Skyscraper') And she gets an artificial leg at the end!' (incredulously)

In this story, written when she was eleven, Eve is with her mother and going to see a new skyscraper. It is very much a story of mother-daughter solidarity. The fear of the falling building is built up as the mother reassures the daughter that tall buildings only appear to move in the sky. In the story/dream there is running and then falling and a blackout. The daughter's life is saved, but her leg is lost:

Mum said we could go and see the new skyscraper being built it was realy as high as it was going to get Mum's was in the shower and I was waching T.V. mum rushed over to me and turned off the T.V. she said get some shoes on were going she ordered me I ran in my bedroom and swang open my wardrobe door and grabed some shoes I quickly put them on and mum was allready in the car beaping the horn I ran in the car and said Why are you allways in a hurry she didn't answer We didn't say anything till we got to the site mum and me walked soon we got a big shadow over us I looked up I said its moving no stuped mum said rember when we looked at MYRE AND you thought it was moving but it was'nt I knew she was right. We were right in the middle of the big shadow what if it *did fall. I looked up once more it was falling I ran and I ran it seamed ages to the end of the sight there it was I threw myself to the ground BASH I FELT my leg get crushed then blackout that's all I rember from the acedent Next thing I saw was a doctor's face I looked at the rest of me I saw somthing awful I taped it it was a artificial leg and I wrote this after I got out of the hostipal ME AND THE LEG ARE DOING FINE.*

Accounting for writing like this can only be done through the use of symbol/sign. Here the leg represents loss, though not a irrepairable one. The building has meanings of the same qualities as Jane's metaphors of the cage, the door and the shark (but I found no corresponding metaphors in any of the boys' writing.) This could indicate that these girls are playing with, or are locked into, the fears of generations of women. The writing of narratives, where the girl-subject is split between differently gendered positionings, inserts like slips of the tongue.

The unconscious constantly reveals the failure of identity. In Eve's 'Skyscraper Story' her usual achieving self is submerged, and in its place is a self crushed by circumstances. Reading the Writings (Appendix A) psychoanalytically uncovers some of these instabilities and discontinuities of psychic life, though what the implications of this are for feminist theory is not clear (Grosz 1990:147). One of the dangers is that such readings perpetuate a female misogyny by pushing the girls into stereotypes. Eve resists a series of identities as she writes, but her final adoption is of a brave face in spite of misfortune:

I saw somthing awful I taped it it was a artificial leg and I wrote this after I got out of the hostipal ME AND THE LEG ARE DOING FINE.

In this passive acceptance of her fate, Eve follows the discourse of the smiling woman suppressing her rage.

Chloe

So far, I have not put the spotlight on Chloe. There were times in the second and third year of the project when I thought she would ask to be out of the study. Maybe she didn't know she could ask. Certainly she showed me quite often how much she disliked me being there (5.3.90, 14.5.91). She didn't just dislike me though. She often disliked writing. Consequently, what she had to write as an obedient subject of literacy pedagogy was often brief, ironic, over-the-top. The writing I shall consider in a moment is from one of the rare times when she wrote prolifically. (As explanation: Chloe had a major set-back with a computer, which meant that she simply didn't want to give it anything else to process.) After she graduated from primary school to secondary school Chloe became particularly lucid in her retrospective and current decriptions of herself (Appendix C). When I talked with her at my house (1992) she amazed me with her confidence, candidness, verboseness:

(29.5.92)
She suggests coming to my place. She does... After 45 minutes [of her] *talking I have to end it and drive her into town so that she meets her mother on time. She would have talked longer.*
Me: You wrote a lot of rhyming stuff.
C: Yeah it's easier...

Here is some of her writing from three years earlier:

One slimey night Matthew Monster woke up and climbed out of his snotty compost heap. He decided to get filthy and go for a ghostboard ride. He took Lucy Longbones too. While they were boarding they met Dangerous Donna. They said "Hi fish face." "Give us a kiss sweetie" said Donna. Lucy Longbones and Matthew Monster ran away and were never seen again.

What is it that Chloe aged nine imagines and structures here? One reading of her story is that a boy who likes filth takes a girl for a ride. This positions the girl as passive. However, they are confronted by a dangerous girl, proving that there is a split in female possibilities. In order to survive their encounter with her they present solidarity and bravery. Here the passive girl accepts the protection of the boy against the threat of the dangerous girl. The dangerous girl tries to win the boy away from the passive girl by asking for a kiss. The passive girl retains her boy by running away with him. But the cost for her is that no-one ever sees her again. A ten-year-old's equivalent of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice? Or the beginning of the feminine descent in the myth of Inanna? Why is Lucy, who in real-life is Chloe's best friend, positioned as the passive girl and Donna, who is the schoolgirl on the outer, positioned as the dangerous girl? Does Chloe value passivity? It appears from what she does that this is not so; and Lucy is in my estimation highly agentic.

What Chloe wrote as a kind of a joke, a play on the friends who in real life vie for her attention, is read by me as a serious play with dual possibilities of femininity. But the binary choice of the goodgirl/badgirl is a humanist assumption of individual socialization patterns, norm conformings, moral training, imposed didactics. The damned whore or God's police dichotomy positions women in humanism as entirely one or entirely the other, and women who know they are both (more or less) find no discursive space for the femininity that is theirs. In poststructuralist theory madness, irrationalism, deviance, secrecy and unacceptability shift. This is because of a different discursivity and a tolerance of ambiguity. At the conscious level, this was probably far from a writer's mind. Certainly I have read beyond Chloe's innocent little episodes with its play on alliteration, real-life naming and kissing. Three years after she wrote this, Chloe sat on the couch in my house (29.5.92):

Me: You were pretty free with your writing, all of you.

C: Yeah, he wouldn't give us topics all that much 'cos when he gave us topics nothing much amounted of it.

Me: Mmm. But at the same time you often got pretty sick of it. You know you often didn't want to do it (write).

C: Yeah.

Me: Are you a person who writes a lot now?

C: Yeah English is me favourite subject other than sport and PE (physical education).

Me: Have you got plans for when you leave school?

C: Well I'm hoping to leave school when I turn 15, and do years 10, 11 and 12 by correspondence and get a job as a jockey's apprentice.

Me: Oh, right.

C: 'Cos you know I've got dreams of havin' me own racehorses and that and trainin' them. I've got an early start, like one of the mares at my place, like, many adults can't handle her and I've got the foal I'm breakin' in.

Me: So have you got a chance of doing this?

C: Yeah. The only reason I'd do correspondance is 'cos Mum and Dad, like they wouldn't approve unless I did.

Chloe is in fact a champion horse-woman, competing regularly and successfully. The year I began the Ruralsville research was her first year at that school. Her family was newly arrived in the district, which maybe accounted for the tidy bedrooms Chloe and her sister Kylie took me to the first time I visited (13.7.89). Three years later (29.5.92), Chloe told me:

Like when I first got there I had a lot of trouble. Like people were pickin' on me. Like Rob Baker. And Lucy she was really nice to me. And we got to be friends.

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She explains the rift between Donna and Lucy and herself as:

C: And Donna tried to get close to us, like she got Prince [she got a horse] *but she can't really ride. Like we've given her advice but she doesn't really take it in.*

This isolation of Donna's from the Chloe/Lucy duo has long lasting effects. Donna's mother, who is also Margaret's mother, tells me, (May 1992):

Jenny: (to me, but Margaret is there too) Donna's three and a half years younger. She'll be hopefully as intelligent as Margaret is, or as Margaret thinks she is.
Me: It's really interesting to me because I've watched the youngest girl at the school become the middle-aged girl, and the middle-aged girls become the oldest girls. But I haven't been out there this year.
Jenny: Mmm. That's right. Actually Donna's been in a little bit of strife this year. It's nothing bad. It's just that she's been a little bit silly. I don't know whether it's because she's in grade six.
Me: Mmm.
Jenny: She's been showing off.
Me: Oh it's good for her. Testing herself out.
Jenny: Yeah, and I said to Paul (Mr B), well there are a couple of the girls that are similar. Ar, they're trying to be top dogs.
Me: Yeah.
Jenny: And so, you know, it just keeps growing, one is silly and then the other one, and it just keeps getting worse.
Me: Yeah.
Jenny: So, ah, she comes in sometimes and she's as high as anything, but, ah, she's got to be careful, because I say to her, the little kids see what you're doing and then they think that that's the acceptable thing. I said, you have to be very careful, you have to set a good example for them.
Me: Mmm.
Jenny: I say, you have to know the difference between being ridiculous and having fun.
Me: Mmm.
Jenny: We don't want to stop you from having fun, but it does get a little bit tiresome. She's just being silly all the time. And he's having difficulty in teaching them.

As a mother, Jenny is concerned about her younger daughter's behaviour at school. She sees being silly as unacceptable in a grade six girl, and competing for the top of the social hierarchy as a negative quality. Chloe, who in 1992 had moved from primary school to secondary college, left vacant the position she occupied as leader. What Donna appeared to have done was vie with Lucy, who was physically quite a lot smaller than she was that year, for the positioning she wanted.

Here is another of Chloe's stories from the time when she paired up with Lucy, to the exclusion of Donna (1991). It has obvious borrowings from patriarchal fairy tale schemas, but in it she struggles with female identities:

Once there was a king called Straimme. He had two sons. There names were Brett and Anthony. When they were old enough to marry, the king said "Fire an arrow, were it lands your wife will live." Brett and Anthony did what they were told. Anthonys arrow landed in an apple. Bretts arrow landed in a spiders webb. Anthony cut the apple open, out crawled a worm. Anthony took it back to palace. When Brett took the arrow out of the web a spider scrated out his eye. Anthony got married to the worm that night. At the feast the worm ate to much and it went up in smoke. The beautiful princess Donna emerged from the smoke. Donna and Anthony had 10 kids. There names were David, Thomas, Anthony, Aaron, Margaret, Eve, Samatha Kate and Mary.

Here the classic outcomes of traditional tales are complicated by Chloe's spider scratching out the eye of the prince and the worm eating too much. Chloe's story represents a reversal of the story of a girl kissing a frog who turns out to be a prince. Further, by presenting the female characters as lowly animals, the narrative allows for their transformation, a possibility not available to the two princes. Chloe's story continues:

The Witch. Part 2 of the Worm
Brett some how walked into a town. He found a witch who acted friendly. The witch whos name was Jane. Jane said "I will give you some new eyes if you marry me". Brett answered "Yes". Jane took him in her house. There infront of a big black pot she said mistirly "Sky and Rie and Apple pie, give my husband to be new eyes" All the time when Jane was chanting Brett was blindfolded. Jane took the blind fold off. Brett chroused "Horay I can see" ten times. The marriage was on that day. They had ten kids there names were, Tom, Joe, Sam, Mick and Michial, and Michelle, Jane, Liby, April, and Summer.

The narrative follows a male character rather than a female one, and Brett's problem of blindness is resolved by his meeting with, curing by, and marriage to a friendly witch. However, being wise cannot save the witch from the same multiple child-bearing fate as the woman in Part One. The epic concludes with the first woman divorcing, remarrying and continuing to reproduce:

Part 3 of The Worm
Donna and Anthony got divorced Donna got married to Brett. Anthony gave Donna too cats for wedding presents the girl cat had kittens 20. Brett and Donna had 10 more kids. There names were Anne, Andrew, Ned, Nelly, Tom, Tilly, Candy, Cen, Mandy and Mery.

The obsession with child-bearing is a feature of all of the girls' writing at some stage, though not evident in the boys' writing. A question I ask myself now is why have I seen the girls' writing focus on child-bearing as literal, when I have seen so much else that they have written as metaphoric? The answer seems to lie in the non-metaphoric experiences of my own multiple mothering. Giving birth to a thesis simply isn't the same (though I have produced both four babies and four degrees). The real-life sequel to Chloe's narrative is that some months later her own seventeen-year-old sister moved back with the family to present Chloe and her younger sister Kylie with a nephew. Kylie's reactions were far-reaching:

(14.5.91) It's damp outside but six-year-old Kylie is bare-armed and bare-footed. Most of her clothes are drying inside on the heater. Mr B tells me she must have come through the paddocks today instead of walking on the road. I'm a bit surprised. This doesn't seem like her. She looks a real urchin. Very dirty.

In presenting a sketch of Chloe I have been unable to keep the other girls (and myself) out. The ethnographic nature of the data gathering meant a focus on a culture, not on individuals/subjects. I shall proceed to describe Kylie now, as I have already begun.

Kylie

Later in the afternoon, in the classroom, I ask her about her seventeen-year-old sister Julie:

(14.5.91)
Me: (To Kylie) Has your sister got that new baby yet?
Kylie: (scornfully) A course she has. She brang it home last Sunday.
Brett: (calling out to me from across the room, he's heard our talk) Mr B pronounced (announced) on the school camp that Chloe and Kylie are aunts now.
Me: The baby was born last week while you were on the school camp?

Kylie: (loudly) Yeah. (still scornful of my lack of knowledge.)

Later still I am outside, at the back of the shelter shed. Kylie comes up to me.

Kylie: You call me Auntie Kylie. (I am busy writing. I think this is what she says.)
Me: OK Auntie Kylie. (She gives me an almighty thump across the back. Three or four times. She hits me hard.)
Me: What are you doing that for?
Kylie: (angrily) I said don't call me Auntie Kylie.
Me: (genuinely shocked) I'm awfully sorry. I really thought you said call me Auntie Kylie.
H: Well I didn't. (She thumps me again for good measure.)

Kylie as a new aunt is confused, attention seeking and lacking in identities acceptable to herself. What does she write at this time? On this particular day she writes: '*The best thing that happened at Wallawong was going home*', and beside it she has made a drawing of a car. This writing, though, is not of her own topic choice. Mr B has told the 'children' to write about the day they spent at Wallawong on a school trip. The next piece of writing Kylie produces (28.5.91), is:

My owner left me because she hated me. She sold me and took Jill for the money and rode off. She left me with a very nice owner. Then she cared for me. She didn't whip me.

Here Kylie deals with change, with unpredictability and ultimately with the necessary happy ending. As she struggles to make sense of her own life, the horse becomes a sign of herself and a sign of hope in the face of misery. She adds a second part to her story:

It was a sunny day and there was a circus that day two km away from my home. I found my owner and galloiped to the circus. I was late for my prefuomuorse this horse named Jill was practing for me. I was angrey.

Here she finds, in her writing, the rage she needs. A week later she writes:

Mum said to pack my bags she told me what to put in my bags I will tell you what I put in my bags. A good T-shirt. My jimboots. My toys.

Whether this really happened or not I don't know. The fact that it is written about, means the packing of the bags becomes an actual event in Kylie's life as a writer. Writing, for her, plays an important part in her individual consciousness. Writing as a horse allows her to subconsciously explore possibilities. In contrast, I present a much younger Kylie in dialogue with her mother and sister.

Kitchen table talk transcript (13.7.89):

Jackie: (Kylie and Chloe's mother, talking to me) I remember form two, form two and probably form five. You had to find out what was in the newspapers, or on a TV show.

Kylie: (voice over her mother's, to me. Here she is five.) Mum's Dad (pause while she gets it right) Mum's Mum died before she was even big enough to grow away, was even big enough. (voice fades out in some confusion)

Jackie: It's hard to think about it. I can hardly remember. (about when her children began to write)

Kylie: (interrupting, quickly) It started before grade prep. that's all I know.

Jackie: (voice over) Kylie, don't do that darling. (Kylie is leaning across her glass of chocolate milk)

Here is not just an almost illiterate Kylie. Here the transactional nature of spoken language allows for none of the metaphoric potential of writing.

Metaphors, Desires and Fantasies

For Kylie and her sister, horses are important, as metaphors in writing as well as realities in everyday life. Here Chloe talks about the story she lost a year earlier on the word processor:

(29.5.92)

C: Oh, that one, oh, if you write them too long they're too long and the computers won't let you load it. It was a real good story. (pause) It was a major, (pause), it was about this girl and her parents die and she lived with an uncle in a circus, and see there was this horse that nobody could ever handle, and he was supposed to be this special breed, a black horse and he had white on his rump, and she tamed him, and like she ended up doing these acts, (circus acts) and like that was as far as I got. Then she was going to be chosen to go over to Vienna and learn all these fancy tricks and compete with horses. And it was a good idea but I couldn't get it printed.

(she lost the file) You know you get an idea and when you get past that idea another idea's already there.

Managing the unmanagable is, for Chloe, represented by the horse she tames. For her, horses are a better proposition than computers. But by entering into the literate mode of meaning-making, she can say through her writing what she cannot say in fact. If the horse represents the phallus, then Chloe is dealing with what is, as she terms it, 'major'. That her younger sister has decided to also write about horses is not surprising given the priorities in this family's leisure time. However, there is a tradition at Ruralsville of the girls following through themes in their writing, sometimes over periods of years. Unknown to the teachers who work with these girls at subsequent schools, their primary school stories continue on to become a kind of personalized mythology. Chloe tells me (29.5.92) she 'got an A minus' for one she reproduced at secondary school for her unsuspecting English teacher. Eve presents me (2.4.92) with one she is very pleased with having written in Year Nine. It is a reproduction of her Grade Six psychodrama *THE SKYSCRAPER*:

The building was dark and gloomy. It was an old creaky building, the kind that you think is going to collapse on you. I felt like it was leaning over me and the wind was blowing a shivering cold breeze down my neck. The street was dead silent except for the faint noise of someone, somewhere, crying ... Then I heard it, as I still hear it now, her scream ... I wanted to run but my feet wouldn't move. That's what I remember of the night she died. The rain, the dark, me and the silence of her chilling scream.

Sometimes the themes of the writing are determined by the events of the school, as with the stories sparked off by the real-life robbery they all saw evidence of (23.7.89). A psychoanalytic reading of stories takes into account the discourses of femininity and the signings of subconscious meanings, not the recordings of real-life events. Psychic meanings are produced at Ruralsville when the girls are free to construct their own writing topics or themes, as did Eve and Margaret at the back of the bike sheds when they dreamt up the L PLATE stories. Here the learner plate that they assign to me as the driver of the metaphoric car represents the position they would like to have put me in at the time. Subconsciously, these girls tried out the superiority of adulthood by constructing a car which I could not drive. The car metaphor recurs in many of the other girls' writings with the girl writer herself as the one in control of it, (Donna 1989, Jane 1991, Chloe 1991).

I am not sure about the genesis of the school-burning stories (Margaret 1989, Jane 1989, Donna 1991). I suspect it is teacher initiated, and the result of school discussion. Projections of life as an adult (Jane 1990), or of ***WHAT I WANT/DON'T WANT TO BE WHEN I GROW UP***, (Margaret 1989, Eve 1989, Donna 1989) were also (I think) teacher initiated, as was the spate of Santa stories regularly reproducing itself each December.

Slumber parties, with and without fantasies, were popular (Jane 1991, Lucy 1990). So was the ghost house theme (Margaret, 1989, Donna 1990, Jane 1991, Chloe 1990). There is also a fascination with worms (Margaret, 1989, Lucy 1990, Chloe 1991, Jane 1991) and with dog training (Chloe 1989, Margaret 1989, Donna 1991).

What results from this thematic breakdown now is that psychic themes are not to be found in the topics themselves, but in the uses individual girls make of them. Getting off the track of reality and onto the track of the fantasy is a feature of all of these themes. Being in line with the latest school-girl writing fashion seemed to be the object, and each theme appeared as an cyclic patterning drafted by a working couple. Being bodily together was an important part of this pattern making:

(9.5.89)

Later, Eve and Margaret sitting side by side.

Eve: (seemingly to herself) I don't know what to write. (pause, maybe she wants me to direct her, I'm reading a book.) Are you starting a new story Margaret?

Margaret: Yes

The younger girls also adopted this practice of writing close together, though this was not a practice of the boys and was not initiated by their teacher:

(14.5.91)

Donna and Jane are writing outside. Round the back of the shelter shed. Donna is on her stomach facing Jane. Lying on the long wooden seat. Jane is cross-legged facing Donna. Also on the wooden seat. Both using pencil and writing rapidly. Silence.

The discourses available to the Ruralsville girls allow them to explore themselves through themes and through each other's fantasies. Because subjectivity is constructed through discourse, these girls stay with the half-jocular genres of story writing that they have established as the discourse of their unconscious. The fact that unconscious meanings surface occasionally is a measure of their freedom within their new-found literacy, which enables them to jokingly present themselves for each others' reading. The freedom of the pre-writing stage allowed only for non-verbals. The writing stage gives them ways of going beyond physical play to verbal play. By storying, these girls are able to make more complex psychic meanings than had been possible for them before. Recording those meanings on paper meant producing a lasting and tangible object as the result of their struggles with subjectivity. The crucial changes which young girls undergo are thus documented and available for re-reading, primarly by themselves.

Mr B suggests no changes to their writing, apart from those of syntax, spelling or extension of text. The girls know that his interest is in their production of a literate product, and this gives them the freedom to control the content, its themes, its episodes and its resolutions. By being a beginning writer, each girl comes to see herself as other in a way she has not experienced before. Lacan theorized that this happens at the acquisition of speech, when the little girl realizes that she is other to the boys and the men in her life. The girls at Ruralsville realize that together they form a culture that is theirs. As they realize this, they construct a reality through what they write, and for this purpose the production of writing drafts before final copies allows for the re-thinking of meanings. Many of the girls' stories are written over what, for a 'child', is a considerable period of time: three to five weeks is usual for an epic story such as Jane's *ROTTON APPLES ON TOST* or Chloe's *THE WORM*. In these epics the writer can be read changing her mind about the actions she wants her protagonists engaged in. It appears that these mind changes relate to the girl writer's changed subjective positioning during the weeks of drafting, polishing and developing her narrative.

If we follow Lacan we could say that having moved into the symbolic order of language and gendered subjectivity in babyhood, the girl beginning writing continues with this differentiated positioning featuring in her writing. Her progressive abilities in writing enable this to happen within a social context. In babyhood, her positioning was as a separate subject. As a beginning writer she moves into a community of beginning writers like herself, and adopts the discourses, values and signs she sees around her. Schooling operates so that the culture of girlhood flourishes through the writing program, as well as in the playground. Kylie and Natasha, who could not at the start of 1989 write more than a limited sentence with teacher help, embody the togetherness the older girls show in their shared themes, symbols and readings of each other's writing. Here they are aged four and five:

(11.4.89)
Kylie and Natasha have tied their windcheaters around their middles and are idly swinging their arms back and forth now that the signal's come for release. They're starting Group-work and Talk before they have to write.

Their understanding of girlhood also extends to include an awareness of the women around them, and of the dilemmas they face. The gendered discourses of the school in fact position girls as other to boys and to men teachers, although they know their affinity with the women. This then places them in positions to affirm their collective femininities with and through each other. Eve tells me (4.2.92) how she and Margaret felt when they were in Grade 6 and they made up the play about 'Fat Women' (Appendix B).

(Video, Nov. 1989)

E: Oh no! (reading my notes made of the video) Was it an ad. (advertisement) for Jenny Fat?

Me: Yes. It was quite clever.

E: It was because they always go on about all these women. I think we just turned it around and said "Well why not be fat and enjoy it?"

Me: It was your idea?

E: Oh yes. With Margaret. Me and Margaret, we really stuck together. And the boys and Mr B they were really sexist. He wouldn't let us play football and those kind of things.

The affirmation of femininity comes strongly through the play, which was presented at the 1989 school camp to the boys, Mr B and the attending mothers. It was enacted by all of the girls in the school together but organized and scripted entirely by Eve and Margaret. It follows an item from four boys:

(Nov. 1989)

Still at the camp, the children are putting on a concert. The boys item is first. There are four of them. It's mostly mime. They use scripts, a ball, cushions on the floor. And chairs. It seems to be called "You'll get a medal." The girls' item is basically Eve and Margaret with the others added in. At one stage Margaret kisses Eve on the cheek in such a matter of fact way that it seems perfectly OK. The audience accepts it as theatre. The comedy later seems to be about fat people with cushions stuffed up their T-shirts. Some clever timing. At the finish the girls sing together a song they have written.

The effect of the large cushions is to make the girls look pregnant. What Eve set out to produce as a send-up of women's desire for slenderness can be also read as a two-way statement of patriarchal femininity: fat is bad and fat is baby. In the play Eve makes fatness/pregnancy desirable. The final song is a solidly together celebration of girlhood, visually complete with stomachs/wombs.

The awareness of the world of the boys around them is also a part of these girls' girlhood. This can involve taking on the aggressive discourses of boyhood within the writing, as Lucy demonstrates:

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I jumped on the escalater and I saw Batman Bug. He took out his bug bullet and shot. I got my stinger and zap! I zapped him dead. I jumped on the escalater and I saw Batman Bug. He took out his bug bullet and shot. I got my stinger and zap! I zapped him dead.

Along with the other girls, Lucy's verbal killings are either for her own defence or for easy plot resolution. The boyish themes of aggression and competition, though able to be produced by the girls, form only a very small part of the girls' writing corpus. Being skilled in discourses of boyhood is not only a feature of the writing, it can also be seen in the playground:

(19.2.91)
Chloe's got everyone except the three smallest boys and Kylie doing handstands in a circle on the grass. She counts loudly 1 2 3 and on 3 up they all go. She judges the worst and excludes them from the next round. All the older boys in the school are doing what she says.

When a girl becomes the oldest in the school, she has a particular power over all of the others. For Eve and Margaret in 1989, and for Donna in 1992, this power also involved physical height. Chloe, who is not so tall, describes the friendship the older girls have with the boys:

(29.5.92)
C: Like we still go out as a group, like playin' in the creeks and that. Like it won't just be one or two of us, it'll be me, Lucy, Jane, Luke, Aaron and Brett. 'N then we'll meet Justin and other boy, Peter Porter. You know we really stuck together as a group.
Me: Yeah, (pause) so it wasn't just a girls' group.
C: No, it was the whole lot of us, I mean there wasn't enough girls, after a few years there was only five girls (in the school).

This mixed-sex group-friendship is in contrast to the coupled-friendships the girls have with each other:

(26.3.91)
Chloe and Lucy come and sit facing me two desks away. I'm writing on the sloped wooden top of a desk. They're sitting on theirs. Folders on their laps. Feet on the seat. Heads higher than mine. Chloe's writing "Biggy Buggy" quite diligently. No talk. First draft.

Chloe: (to Donna, who is nearby) Donna, will ya get me a pencil sharpener? (Donna does so but gets no thanks.)

Chloe: (a bit later, again to Donna, although Lucy is beside her) Donna get me another pencil. (Donna does.)

Here Donna is positioned as the one who is other to the friendship couple. Donna works this out through her writing:

The day I went in a rocket Chloe, Lucy and I went to the moon. Chloe drove the rocket. It went from side to side. It was great fun. On the moon it was rough and we met Anthony Meyer. He is a pain in the neck and he went home.

Here she imagines herself in a trio with Lucy and Chloe, a not very frequent scenario in reality. Getting rid of the unwanted boy is important to her desire for female friendship here. Confronted with continuing exclusion in real life, she resolves her situation through her writing:

Nigel the sheep butted Brett and Chloe, Lucy, Anthony and I broke a branch. We squashed Nigel and he died because he got crippled. We laughed because we didn't own the sheep. We did not get blamed because they did not see us at all. We ate Nigel because he was no use. He would just go to the knackery. We had a good time eating him and we made a sheepy. Chloe slept with the sheepy and that was funny, because she was 13 years old.

Here the grade five Donna belittles the then grade six Chloe by presenting her with a cuddle blanket. The earlier part of the story has in fact come from the boys at the school, who initiated a series of Nigel narratives. Being rejected by the girls has prompted Donna to select another discourse, this time from boyhood. Chloe discusses one of her own gender stereotyped stories with me two years after the event:

(26.3.92)

Me: The boys didn't write things like that.

C: Yeah the boys would of wrote things like Nigel the ram and all that. (talks about Nigel the ram, avoiding the issue) ... like he (the ram) belonged to this lady and she had bright red hair and everybody thought she looked like a stoplight. I think she leased the paddock.

Me: Donna wrote about Nigel the ram.

C: Yeah, you would have got this story where me and her climbed up this tree and the whole tree was shaking (more narrative about the ram).

Me: In her story she makes you into a real sook, she gives you a sheepie (a cuddle blanket made out of the ram's wool) like a baby.

C: Yeah, we kind-of got in a fight, so that's why you do that.

Here Chloe tells us about some of the boyish origins of the Nigel stories. I wondered who said that the woman's hair looked like a stoplight. Hardly a simile coined by children from a no-shop town. What misogynies was Donna prepared to commit because of her exclusions by girl friends? The symbols of the cuddle blanket and the squashed ram are indicators of Donna's unconscious attempts to adopt the order of the other. I wondered if, at home, she was still a secret blanket cuddler.

Psychoanalysis sees the subject as consciously gendered. That this gendering is ordered by language is evident not only by the spoken language of the Ruralsville girls, but by what gets written. And it is in writing that the girls have the freedom to draw on the range of metaphors that provide clues to the meaning making of the unconscious. The production of fantasy narratives allows for an ordering that everyday speech does not. A comparison of the girls' written language and spoken language leaves few doubts as to the differences between the two in terms of psychic potential. Writing opens up the possibility of different meanings. These meanings include the metaphoric and the fantastic.

Walkerdine (1990:15) describes the mouth and the abdomen as sources of anxiety and hatred. Kylie, aged six, writes that she wears lipstick on her mouth. Eve, a little overweight at age eleven, writes a play where all the girls stuff pillows under their T-shirts. Male fantasies of the feminine are evidenced by the notes passed from the boys to the girls. The girls' awareness of themselves as objects of a gaze are shown by their selected ornamenting of their bodies - the colourful clothes, the earings, the hair. The representation of the feminine is embodied and inscribed, for themselves and for others. In multiple ways, young girls take the positions of women, through the body and through language.

Literacy, though, is a skill of adulthood, marked by its unattainability for the very young. By becoming literate, girls and boys move into the modes of language used by those who are older. But not yet being adult may mean that what children want to write is not what their elders imagine. The metaphors devised by children may have quite different functions from the metaphors of adults. What is it that children want to write for themselves? What uses does written language have outside the contexts of schooling and patriarchy? The following is taken from the Chronology. I wrote it when I was in the school vegetable garden with Chloe and Lucy, then the oldest girls in the school:

(11.2.91)

Chloe picks an under-ripe sweetcorn cob and eats a bit. Spits the rest on the ground. Also picks a sun-ripened tomato.

Lucy: Let's chuck it at Mr B.

Chloe: Nah. Let's chuck it on the roof. (She does. And it makes a substantial plopping sound as it lands on the corrugated iron of the shelter shed. It is now that I notice the dusty top of the shelter shed walls. Way up high just under the drain pipe is a whole wall-width of names. Handwritten by the fingers of the school's tallest students for the last half decade or so.)

Me: How did they get up there?

Chloe: Oh when you're big enough you can reach it if you stand on the seat. (Margaret and Eve have apparently done so, as their names appear along with those of all the boys. Lucy and Chloe's names are not yet there. I am reminded of Koori sacred cave paintings and special initiation rites. These children have their own.)

Reviewing Theories

Lacan (1977) theorized that the very young child's self, or ego, is split initially into the 'I' who does the watching and the 'I' who is watched. This has been called the mirror phase, and psychoanalists see it as coming before the gendered and symbolic order of spoken language is established. From a literary writer's point of view, this split continues as these writers write metaphorically of what they see, whilst at the same time writing themselves into their texts. From the Ruralsville data, we can say that a parallel to this is that in narrative writing, the voice of the writer is the 'I' who watches the world and herself. At the same time, the awareness of others as readers creates a knowledge of the 'I' who is watched. For writers, this mirroring has its equivalents in the earlier process which we underwent as toddlers. Being a primary school girl means knowing that others will read what she has written, and catering for their reactions by addressing them as audience.

For the Ruralsville girls, the stories they wrote, although nominally for the teacher, and sometimes photocopied and given to me, were contentually for themselves and for each other. The act of writing for the girl-group audience marks the girl as having entered the world of authors. It is also yet another mark, in her history of femininity, of herself as belonging to girlhood. Being thus able to doubly authorize what she means, is, for her, a benefit of literacy. This allows her to make fun of the school, the adults and the children in her life, as she celebrates her girlhood. She does this with the full support of the girls around her, including those only remembered from past years. Without literacy, this jesting, together with its accompanying undertones of symbolisms, would not be possible. It is these undertones that I have been deconstructing in this thesis, so that a series of subjective positions are able to be theorized. The mirror of the girls' watched selves is the writing they produce. The selves which watch are the writers as they write; and the selves which are watched are the writers being read. Writing and writers are more than this though, as the act of writing not only reflects but constructs.

The second part of Lacan's theory is that the primary splitting of the psyche is resolved when the young child learns to talk. Being a talker means also being a listener, which Lacan sees as causing a reorganization of the psyche, and hence of the unconscious. Again applying the analogy of the Ruralsville writing to Lacan's theory, it can be seen that reading and writing can also be extensions of the listening-talking dichotomy. The young schoolgirl resolves her non-literate state by beginning to write and read, and through this new literacy, enters into still more orderings of language, of psyches and of the unconscious. This, I am theorizing, is what happens between the ages of four and eleven as a further splitting of the ego. At primary school the girl resolves the symbolic order of gender dichotomies by being able to assume a persona.

This means that with her newly found writer's voice she is able to be other than herself. This newly found potential in written language gives the girl the means to bond herself socially to other writers like herself. These social bondings then allow the girls to construct subjective positions together. By authoring written meanings, the girl re-orders her psyche to accomodate the collabarative meanings of other girls. By being a writer and not only a reader she is in a position to impose her own view of the world upon it. From the age of four onwards she practises being assertive, being resistant and being fantastic as she writes. The Ruralsville data presents a specific textual location of these events.

In these ways, each part of Lacan's ego-splitting theory can be applied to beginning writing, though not in the ways intended by Lacanians. The question for feminists is: how does the gender order re-establish itself through the girl's initial production of literary texts? The literate splitting of the reader and the writer, I am theorizing, is a tertiary split to be added to the primary split of watching/watched and the secondary splitting of listening/talking. If this is so, then does this process of splitting continue throughout life, as major events present themselves? For example, could sexuality be a further splitting of the I/me as the young woman writes/speaks/watches herself anew? Is bodily encoding of sexuality a similar process to verbal encoding of meanings? Is it re-coding that enables the woman to be at the point of change? Are the Ruralsville girls at the point of re-coding themselves by their learning of the literacy skills: in the same way as they re-coded themselves at the point of learning the oracy skills? I looked to feminist psychoanalytic theorists for answers to the questions I must focus on here, but which have wider implications for feminism.

The symbolic status of the phallus is unconsciously taken up by some women (Mitchell 1984). For the Ruralsville girls, becoming dominant appears to be related to their writing, in that the writing rehearses, through metaphors, what can later be enacted. Thus, a writing of the discourses of aggression can come before being aggressive in the playground. Each of the Ruralsville girls has a strong belief in her own ability. She is highly active in the construction of herself as a writer and as a social being at her school. Not yet a teenager, she nevertheless tries out, in writing, a range of possibilities for herself regarding young adulthood. Chloe has always intended to be a jockey, Eve wants to go to drama school, Margaret says that she will be a (young) mother. There is no evidence of these girls' consideration of their own older adulthood, however, although numbers of off-spring feature in their preoccupations.

By questioning the functioning of the discursive and signifying systems at the Ruralsville school, I am going against theories of literacy pedagogy to consider phallocentricism in practice. The gendered knowledge of the Ruralsville girls can be measured by what they have written as well as by what they say and do. For this purpose, I have considered those aspects of the unconscious that appear in their writings. If language for women is an attempt to satisfy female desire (Irigaray 1985), then these girls' written language may fill a different need from the written language of the boys. Accounting for differences in writing's contents and genres may by this be explained by desires related to the psyche. Adopting the supposedly feminine qualities of non-linearity and irrationality in narrative could also be read as a measure of the girls' gendering. Amongst the qualities of the patriarchal order are binary thought patterns, the polarization of opposites and a contrastive view of the world (Cixoux 1980). Much of the Ruralsville girls' narrative fantasy writing can by this description therefore read as anti-patriarchal.

In the stage of the mirroring of the 'I' who watches and the 'I' who is watched, the female libido, according to feminist theorists, is unrepressed. When the girl moves to the stage of the 'I' who listens and the 'I' who talks, this female libido retreats into the unconscious. The patriarchal order means that, for boys, the male libido, because of the Oedipus complex, becomes the acceptable one. If this is so, and if what the girls write is indeed an expression of their repressed female unconscious, then this writing of theirs is most important. That the Ruralsville girls have a lot of lengthy and complex narratives to tell is obvious. And compared to the boys, what they write is significantly longer and more complex. For women, writing is a site of femininity's reconstruction (Cixous 1985). For the girls I have studied, femininity and writing are also closely tied together.

In psychoanalytic terms, the girls' identification with other women/girls is important. The relationship of women to each other, of girls to women, and of girls to each other, is constantly evident in what the girls write and in what they do. An extension of a theory of mothering (Chodorow 1978) may explain something of the writing/constructing of feminine relationships for the girls. Feminine bonds are strong.

The Writings (Appendix A) are full of references to mothers being central to the lives of their daughters. Eve's *THE SKYSCRAPER* is one example. Others are Kylie's *WHAT A BUTAFILLDAY IT WAS*, Jane's *THE SAVAGE SALAD*, Donna's *MY NEW TRAC SUIT*, Lucy's *SECRET CASTLE*, Chloe's *SHOPPING* and Margaret's *STOP BITING YOUR NAILS*. More noticable than anything else, though, is the fact that the Ruralsville girls consistently write themselves into their stories. They constantly write about each other and about themselves in relation to the culture of girlhood in which they live. As a social group, these girls' writing is produced from the discourses around them and from their challenges to those discourses.

As separate subjects, there are differences in the gendered meanings the girls make as they construct their femininities. But looked at over time and across the subjectivies of the group, patterns of culture can be read. Looking at cultural aspects of the unconscious, however, is a deviation from usual psychoanalytic practices, which traditionally focus on one person's psyche. The Ruralsville data shows that the unconscious also builds itself collaboratively. Looking at the girls' writing is looking at a series of reflections made from collective meaning making. Constructing narratives, and recording them by writing, is for these girls a social production of signs, desires and temporary resolutions.

I am speculating that, as writers, these girls construct complex femininities for themselves by perpetrating desires. Reading their writing as a psychic discourse is far removed from the practices of classroom teachers and of the girl writers themselves. In doing so I am driven by a view of psychic life as constructive and repressive of knowledge and action, and looking for evidence of the unconscious in the writing. This means focussing on the writer herself, and considering how she comes to be as she is. I do this by reading her writing as her own narrative history of subjectivity. Lacan theorized that young children beginning to talk imagine and structure their gendered subjectivity. I am theorizing that an additional phase of this imagining and structuring occurs as they begin to write.

4. Cultural Post-Scriptions

These descriptions build towards a psycho/social culture of girlhood. As such they represent additions, integrations and reconstructions of/to the descriptions made earlier. In order to develop my theories I shall consider semiotics, femininities and cultures. My way of post-scribing data/discourse has been to quote italicized text excerpts and then interpret and discuss these in terms of my academic readings of other texts. But from a reader's viewpoint what I have done may have raised a whole lot of interesting issues and then proceeded to ignore them. This I acknowledge.

Because I have had to drive hard towards my own positioning in theories, there is much that I am not saying. For example, every time I quote from the data there is a multitude of directions that I could go off into, but in linear text I have to choose one. By going back to the same quotations I hope to demonstrate that there are many ways of proceeding, and none of them is the 'right one'. There is much that remains unsaid that needs to be said, however, and in this section I shall pick up some of the threads left loose at the back of the fabric. In this section I focus on the writing of Lucy, but also consider writing by the others.

Semiotics

In writing, semiotics are apparent in the physical appearance of the drafted or the finished page, in the structuring of the narratives and in the physical positionings and tones of voice of protagonists. I would argue that these semiotics are apparent in the Ruralsville writing of both the girls and the boys, but that the metaphors I have begun to discuss convey forms of semiotics which may be peculiar to girls' writing. Outside of writing, semiotics are inherent in everyday conversations, movements, sounds, non-verbals. It seems that the girls make particular uses of these, and I shall begin to exemplify this now. In this section I clarify my postion regarding uses of semiotic theory, but I shall do so within the confines of my quest for a girlish culture.

Threadgold (1990) directs me to semiotics as a way of making sense of my multi-faceted data, but it appears that her actual uses of semiotics are literary rather than psychic. It seems easier to be a poststructuralist if one avoids the psychic, but the Rurlasville data pushes me into psychoanalytic readings. As a poststructuralist I cannot accept the binary of Kristeva's (1986) theory of radical feminist difference, whereby semiotics is seen (psychoanalytically) as the feminine and the (symbolic order of) language is seen as masculine. The problem is that by the end of the last section it now seems that this is what the data implies: that girls appear to write the feminine as their particular semiotics. Similarly, my own writing of this dissertation may be seen as against the (masculine) symbolic order of language. Here I try to come to terms with the fact that 'feminine' (psychic) semiotics, as Kristeva describes them, are a crucial part of the girls' femininity. Structuralist research would simply compare the girls' writing with the boys' and conclude that Kristeva was right.

What I am interested in, though, is not whether girls are different from boys, but how they take up the subject positions they do. For this purpose, I explore possibilites in a poststructuralist semiotics that encompasses the psychoanalytic and the literary. In this way I look for signs of a culture of schoolgirls. Whilst this is an avoidance of the major question I have raised in the last paragraph, it is a return to my research focus (and an acknowledgment that I cannot answer the question).

The Ruralsville girls dress in whatever they like. This freedom has led to a differentiation from the clothes the boys wear. Although when they begin school, both the boys and the girls wear a school uniform, the girls soon opt for more self-expression. Here I describe them in order of age, beginning with the youngest:

(21.2.89)
It is a hot day. Kylie wears a school dress. She is four.

(14.12.89)
Jane: Blue Hopper jeans rolled up at the bottoms, grey-green fashion T-shirt, white gym boots.
Donna: Blue T-shirt. Pink and white patterned loose cotton trousers.
Lucy: Pale pink cords, pink sox pushed down, navy blue leather buckle shoes, white T-shirt with Happy Birthday Australia 1988 written on it beside pictures of balloons.
Chloe: Long tight purple shorts, matching green and purple loose top, sneakers with white sox.
Eve: Very big black T-shirt with psychadelic butterfly and leaf pattern all over the front, Ken Done patterned pants, black T-bar secondary school shoes.
Margaret: Mauve and white fine stripe pedal pushers. Mauve windcheater with the sleeves pushed up. Sneakers.

These girls, although they live in a very small rural community, are not the daughters of locals from generations back, as I imagined at the start of my study. These girls' parents

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have opted to move to Ruralsville and commute to their jobs. Here are some more descriptions of the daughters. On this same day, they listen to a story being read by Miss Y:

No-one is looking at her. They're all cutting and pasting, colouring or flicking over book pages at their desks. All seven girls wear elasticized bands in their hair.
Donna wears a pink towelling band around a top-knot. Lucy, a pink towelling band at her neck and a green band at her neck. Like Donna, her top-knot is a fountain of hair.
Chloe has a long pony-tail held together with a yellow elastic band. Eve, two black towelling bands and combs.
Margaret, two blue bands on top and also at the back of her head. She's very neat. Kylie, two very thin plaits, which she uses as paint brushes against her cheeks. Also uses them to brush Troy's cheeks quite often as they work. Jane, why do I have no notes about Jane? I've said there are seven girls here today.

Whether this kind of dressing/decoration is the result of patriarchy or a sign of its rejection is difficult to ascertain. Certainly these girls are asserting themselves visually. The semiotics of appearance are important to them in order to identify as a girl-group. Kylie stops wearing her school dress at about the age she becomes an able writer, when she begins to come to school dressed like the others. Being outrageous in feminine dressing can be seen as similar to being outrageous in writing, which, as I have already shown by my presented extracts of the girls' writing, is often the case. 'Outrageous' isn't quite the right word: yes, they are raging in the teenaged use of the word, but the effect is of fun, of festival. Noticably, the boys write more constrained, more conventional stories, and their dressing is also much more subdued. With the onset of secondary school, as I am warned by Eve's new black shoes, there will be an onset of conformity, in appearance and in writing, I suspect. Being a girl at primary school may be the last chance, before outright rebellion, if that will be their choice, for some of these girls to be who they want.

Non-verbal signs of femininity also come through the Writings, where the graphics can be read as semiotic equivalents of the physical appearances of the girls. Around her *APPLE STORY*, Lucy has drawn the two apples of her narrative, and joined them together by juxtaposing the stalks. This image of relationship can be read as a particularly feminine view of the world, with the apples and sun smiling their happiness. Or is this an imposition of the smiling woman of patriarchy? In Lucy's story, which shows accurate knowledge of the life-cycle of fruit blossom, (her parents are maths/science teachers), the narrative deals with a range of psychoanalytic themes: of growth, of having to start again, of being a late starter, of finding a friend, of being small, of paternal authority, of change, of masculine threat and of being 'kept'. Here is the 200 word story written by an eight-year-old:

Hello my name is Hollie. I am an apple. I will tell you a story. Once a upon a time I was only a baby blossom. It was fun. Until a moth came along and ate me. So I had to grow again. I was the last baby blossom left, except for a baby blossom called Sleepy. All the other baby blossoms had turned into little apples. When Sleepy and I where little apples the others were ready to pick. Then a big fat monster came. Sleepy was scared. I said "don't worry". They are only people to pick us. But I was wrong. They picked all the other apples. A little girl said "Daddy, can I pick these two apples?". "NO" They are too small. Sleepy said "Why did'nt they pick us?" I said "Because we are too small. Sleepy cried until night time. At night we fell off the tree. In the morning a worm called Brett came and took Sleepy and me to his house. He did'nt eat us instead he kept us. We were good friends. We had fun together.

Lucy presents this to me as a final copy, complete with texta-coloured border and printed out from a computer. The combination of science knowledge, narrative skill, word processing technology, and visual art as both decoration and extension of text, is all there on one page. Here is a comprehensive femininity, which has been able to be explored at school and through writing. More than this, it is explored through a semiotics with traces of unconscious links with alternatives to writing. What Lucy represents is not contained by words. Drawing is for her neither meaningless decoration nor a sign of juvenility. In Kristeva's (1986) terms, the semiotic operates psychoanalytically in opposition to the symbolic order of language. It seems that Lucy manages both semiotics and language (the symbolic) here. But Kristeva further theorizes semiotics as indicators of a repressed femininity. This is a binary I cannot accept: in placing women and semiotics on one side of her line-down-the-middle, Kristeva dislocates us from a femininity of rationality, order, non-semiotics and language. I would argue that Lucy's femininity contains dimensions from each side of the binary.

I shall retain the term 'semiotics' despite my rejection of its placement by Kristeva as an opposite to language. This allows me a term broader than 'metaphor' to describe representations and signs. Following Threadgold (1990:18), I suggest that semiotic systems together with discourse systems enable language to function. It is through language that subjects position and construct themselves, but language isn't all there is. Multiple signs and complex discourses are there in life-texts and (even) in very short stories written by 'children'. In questioning subjectivity, I cannot ignore the semiotics of visuals, movements, decorations, volume, tone, eye-contact, tempo. Looking at girls means looking at all of these. Butler (1990:145-147) advises that instead of constantly questioning gendered subjectivity, feminists need to identify strategies of repetition. It is by repetition of subversive strategies, Butler says, that female identity is established. Following this I try to focus on a wider schoolgirl culture and see where the repeated subversions are. In particular, I look for repetition of semiotics.

As Mr B informed me, (Appendix 4: Preliminary Descriptions), Lucy is central to the social life of the other girls at the school:

(1.12.92)
Lucy, who is away today, and who is the same age [as Donna], *now in grade six, is "quite a manipulator" he says, "quite scheming, always stirring up trouble." I say, "Yes, she's pretty skilled," but he's not so sure about this.*

By positioning herself so that her friendship choices became actualities and so that her physical smallness compared to the other girls was irrelevant, Lucy can be described as scheming or as skilled. An example of this is her (and Chloe's) non-cooperation in my research. This lasted off and on for about a year. This is where it first began:

(22.10.90)
She and Chloe have moved into the seat Eve and Margaret had last year. These new big girls have not asked me if I'd like a copy of their writing, though the others have rushed me. I've been away overseas. Sent them postcards. At spot check during writing time they are talking to each other. They look at me and giggle. Lucy's white-inking-out something on her page. Then uses the sticky tape on it. Later she lies on her back on the newly carpeted floor. Putting her spilled textas and pencils back into their box. Very slowly. She's writing "The Crash".

I read this as an account of schoolgirl strategies. In this extract, Lucy is avoiding two things: firstly, my need to have some more of her writing in my file, and secondly, actually doing more writing. Although she is no older than Donna, Lucy has been promoted to the desk in the back row with Chloe. This works as a sign for Lucy and for everyone else that she is now in a position to be in control. Resisting writing and resisting me are outcomes of this position of power she now occupies. Applying the white-out and then the sticky-tape to her writing, and then dropping all her pencils on the floor are deliberate procrastinations. At the same time, her sensual enjoyment of the new carpet defies school protocol and adult authority. Here the semiotics of the situation offer clues to her subject positioning. A week later she changes her mind and gives me a copy of *THE CRASH*. Here it is:

Hi I am a possum. I just survived a crash. I will tell you about it. One day I swung over to my friend's house on the flying possum. Just when I got there she said "I was just coming over." So we went back to my house. Mum was crying. I asked her "What is the matter?" She said "The .....Crash. The tree fell down."
PS We had to live with my friend.

Here Lucy has positioned herself as the one not crying and the one whose friend provides them with shelter. In contrast, the one doing the crying and without the providing friend is her mother. This then is a story of assertion. It is one of the repeated themes of Lucy's writing. As a story without males named as such, Lucy repeats a female world. This is noticable in her writing when it is compared to the writing of the other girls. She frequently avoids gender specific pronouns, and in fact, I have only read the protagonist of *THE APPLE* as female because she is herself. Maybe this was not her intention. Checking the data from the Interviews I see that she and I have had no productive discussions about this. Of all the girls at the school, she was the one who never really opened up to me. Perhaps this is why I am presenting her as the last of the seven girls in this chapter. The following is a conversation I tried to have with her at her house:

(28.5.92):
L: It's dumb. (The writing)
Me: Why did you write that? Were you given that as a topic?
L: Nup. I just thought of it.
Me: (reading "The Cloud Person") Where did you get the name from (Pete)? Peter/Peta could be a girl's name or a boy's name.
L: Just thought of it.
Me: It's a great idea having a tyre. I could do with a tyre sometimes. (In Lucy's story the tyre is a rescue device.)
L: (silence)

Here is my interviewing technique at its worst. I am reduced to asking questions which don't get answered. Perhaps some contextual description excuses this (28.5.92):

L picks up her folder of writing I've brought. We are sitting side by side on the couch. She flicks through about three pages roughly. Say's "Yeah, it's mine," and hands it back. I say I'd like to tape us talking about it. (We do. This is represented by the transcript I *have just given) Later, her Mum arrives home from work, as I'm almost leaving. She says nothing about the writing or about me. We talk about how long she's been back at work. Three years, she tells me.*

Lucy's nonchalance works well for her in the classroom in her dealings with boys. Is this because she positions herself as apart from the culture of the other girls or as central to it? The significations of this next scenario are interesting. Here she laughs at Aaron's threats and gets what she wants:

(10.12.91)
Lucy is writing "My Place in Spring". When she wants the rubber again she just gets up and goes to help herself to the one on Aaron's desk. He says to her, "Only Luke's allowed in my desk." And adds, "I'll kiss ya." Lucy laughs and makes off with the rubber. Uses it and returns it. Then goes to sharpen a pencil in the bin at the front. Aaron goes and sharpens his pencil too.

This can be read as pencil-sharpening semiotics, such as I have already discussed in relation to a much younger Kylie, (30.4.91). The pencil and the sharpening of it can seen simply as a diversion tactic popular with the children. The pencil used in this way can also be seen as a sign of power, with phallic connotations. For Lucy to defiantly sharpen her pencil in the face of Aaron's threat to kiss her is a resistance of patriarchal discourses. Aaron knows this and gives up his battle with her, and so stands beside her as a co-sharpener. In feminine fantasy the sharpening bin at Ruralsville might operate in much the same way as the urinals do at a much larger school. Only those with rights may use them. Lucy is temporarily admitted to the brotherhood.

In this section I have described some of the signs of a culture of schoolgirls. These included girlish body decoration, play with longer hair, narrative writing with significant drawings and graphics, classroom desk positioning in hierarchical order, giggling, exaggerated erasion, sensuousness, deliberate slowness, resistance of boyish attempts to position a girl-subject, agency at the sharpening bin. As psychic significations, each of these bears out a theory of feminine difference. As literary significations they can be seen to operate as complements to the discourses that engage the girls. The production of (written and spoken) language is a result of these discourses and semiotics; or as some poststructuralists would have it, all of this is discourse.

How the girls take up discursive subject positions, by a semiotic analysis, suggests uses of visuals, aurals, kinetics and tactiles beyond the materialism of texts. In these multi-

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dimensional ways, it seems that such significations offer the girls strategies of subversive repetitions over time.

Femininities

I have already said that I see 'femininity' as a descriptor of whatever it is that belongs to girls/women rather than to boys/men. In this way I have linked the term to biology to avoid theories dealing with feminine-and-masculine qualities in girls/women (and in boys/men). I thus avoid the debate regarding feminine/masculine combinations within subjects (Davies 1993). The section on feminist theories, at the end of Chapter 1, introduced notions girlhood, resistance, subjectivity, agency, gender and femininity. By tying biology to syntax and femininity's etymology, I hope to have left the door wide open for feminine possibilities, rather than closing it down.

Further, I hope to have allowed for theories of gender as a sociocultural construction (De Lauretis 1990b:257) by ruling out descriptions of successful or assertive women/girls as 'masculine'. By denying femininity an only-negative place, masculinity itself is displaced, giving both femininity and masculinity the capability for any dimension. In this way, although gender represents a primary shaping, it is a shaping by social relations not by biological determinants (Harding 1986). This allows femininity for all women/girls, but requires redefining for those who see it only as pretty, gentle, sissy etc.
The stories read aloud to the girls and boys by the teacher were often noticably misogynist, or at best stereotyped. Sometimes the writing on the board was questionable:

(30.5.89)
On the chalkboard, in Mr B's writing:
"Gertie Guzzle was a grub
You'd never get her in the tub
The sight of soap would make her shout
She'd yell and scream and jump about."

(16.5.89)
1.25 pm and Mr B is reading aloud to the school from some book about witches.
Mr B: (reading) *"It was the smell of witches. It reminded me of the smell outside the men's lavatories."*

On this day, at this moment, Brett wrote his note to Donna telling her she looked good and asking if she liked him.

Brett: (politely and quietly beside me as Mr B reads aloud the witch story) Excuse me. How do you spell "reckon"?

Me: What?

Brett: How do you spell "reckon"? (I see now that he's got a small jotter with "Dear Donna, I love you because I r..." written on it.)

What were the girls in the school to make of this doubled discourse of femininity on this particular day? Here they were confronted by a man teacher reading a book written by another man (Roald Dahl), and at the same time seeing one of themselves given a suggestive note from a boy. Why would the witches smell like the men's lavatories? Why would the writer say that they did? Was Brett's note an insult or a compliment from Donna's point of view? Why did Troy keep on kissing Natasha, as she told me the next time I was at the school?

(30.5.89)

Natasha: (coming up and putting her face right in front of mine) Jeanette, Troy keeps on kissing me.

What did the girls think the word 'sexy' meant at the end of the rhyme about 'When we get married we'll have a family'? Why did the girls clap this rhyme and the boys play cricket?

(30.5.89)

Eve: Jeanette, do you know this? (they proceed to present a hand-clapping rhyme in the schoolroom at lunch-time.) At recess-time Eve and Margaret take me outside so I can write down their clapping rhyme. Demonstration. Lucy and Donna set up their own demonstraton team nearby. All other girls except Jane crowd around. Boys play cricket. Rhyme is:

" Under the bamboo
Under the sea
True love for you my darling
True love for me cha cha cha
When we get married
We'll have a family cha cha cha
Boy for you (point)
Girl for me (point)
Tra la la la la la la. Sexy."

Confronted with these discourses of gender and their related implications for femininity, the girls' writing reflects few traces of misogyny and very little gender stereotyping. Something was happening outside of these discourses of the published stories, the kissing and note-writing scenarios and the family-equals-sex philosophy of the clapping rhyme. For Eve, the need is clear. She needs to write about a famous Australian but flatly rejects the men eulogized in the school's resource book. Here is an older primary school girl actively searching and selecting what and who she will write about. After working on the life of Nellie Melba, Eve rejects the school library outright and replaces it with a fashion magazine so that she can focus her next project on Pru Acton:

(20.6.89)

Now she's hunting for someone else. Her source of information is a book called "One Thousand Famous Australians."

Eve: I didn't get Pru Acton out of there though.

Me: Where did you get her?

Eve: From this fashion magazine. The people I choose, I'd rather have something interesting about them. Otherwise it's a bit boring. (pause) My next one's going to be Errol Flynn.

Me: Why?

Eve: Because he's an actor, and that's what I want to be. (pause, looking at book) Oh no, I can't have him.

Me: Why not?

Eve: Because he's not an Australian. (We peer at the fine print in "One Thousand Famous Australians".) Oh yes, he's born in Hobart. Phew.

Unfortunately for Eve there is no Australian female actor in her book, and neither does she know of any when I ask her. Going against the patriarchal discourses of the school to try to construct their own is a part of the Ruralsville girls' experience of primary school. Women teachers occasionally at the school do not necessarily help in this regard. Here I read Miss Y as adding to the dominance of male discourses.

(11.7.90)

The new teacher, Miss Y, is here now. The emergency's had to leave and be replaced. Miss Y's the same height as Eve. And she strokes Kylie's long fair hair.

Miss Y: (looking up from reading the story to the children) Mr B will I keep reading? (There's a bloke fixing a broken window. Lots of loud banging with a hammer.)

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Added to Miss Y's authority problem is that fact that she is reading the story against the noise of a second man banging a hammer. After the hammer banging and the story reading end, four-year-old Kylie writes her first complaint-against-a-man story, 'I am getting car sick because Dad drives too fast'. Maybe she is empowered to ask Mr B to scribe this, at her dictation, because I am there. Maybe she has picked up that Miss Y and I are very different women. Maybe she is empowered by her own mother's attitudes to the world. Making a different discourse available to herself, I am suggesting, was a product of the multiple discourses she had experience of in relation to gender. Asking a man to write this for her could be resistant of patriarchy. On the other hand, Kylie may simply be involved in a very standard discursive tradition for girls, where jokes and criticisms of fathers are the usual thing (on television and wherever fathers aren't).

The discourses of the Ruralsville community can be typified perhaps by the Ruralsville pub, where horse racing and betting are the only topics of conversation, and where women simply do not go (21.12.89). This compares with Eve's information that although the older girls play with the boys at school sometimes, they never do after school (21.12.89). In Eve's writing, also, this gender difference can be quite marked. *GRANDMA'S HOUSE*, for instance, which is based on realism, shows a polite grandmother offering food to the men, who arrive late but make all the decisions. In *THE MARY MARIE*, Eve's reproduction of the discourse of historical patriarchy is well controlled by her naming of a ship as a female, her description of herself as a wealthy man, her concern for women and children and the women's screams at the imminent shipwreck. On the other hand, Eve could be more resistant than was Kylie in the last example. By this reading, Eve's speaking position is that of an active subject, knowingly being immersed in a traditional tale of putting the women and children first. Here her position as the writer of irony is one of laughing resistance to traditional femininity:

> *The Mary Marie well into the Bloop ocean and sailing well. Me, Lord Abrel Cape the XII and my wife Lady Sarah Geniveve Cape. We are in the "fur" business and are off to Germany to sell our finest furs. We should make a PACKET. The Mary Marie would be sure to get us to Germany if any ship could. It was garatead. BANG we hit a rock. We started to go down. People were jumping off the side the ship. I rushed too Sarah. "Help me grab the furs" I said. Sarah and I grabed as many as we could and rushed to where they were loading women and children. We went over to a boat and started lifting children out and putting furs in then we lowered the boat and jumped in few I thought our stock of best furs would have been ruined ARRRP the boat had a hole in it Lady Sarah started screaming we both jumped out of the boat ARRRP we can't swim.*

Here Eve can also be seen to be positioning the feminine as object rather than as subject: a sign of her internalization of the patriarchal symbolic. However, the fact that she has managed language in this way does not necessarily mean that she herself accepts the placing of the feminine as other. The corpus of her writing suggests that this is simply a voice, or a persona, that she has adopted. For the boys at Ruralsville, this adoption is never necessary, as they know that they never need to be other. The patriarchal order is on their side (Appendix A: Boys' Writing).

An absolute differentiation of femininity and masculinity as constructed by patriarchy is perhaps typified by this:

(11.2.91)
Amongst the collection of colour prints of the children at school, and outside it, is a black and white newspaper cutting of three rows of spread-out and white-dressed young women, and two rows of squashed-up and dinner suited young men. A lone little boy sits dinner-suited in the middle of the front row of the white-dressed young women. It is an uncomfortable Troy, pushed into the structures of masculinity at the age of six, and surrounded by his acquiescing elders. Here Troy is the token young man at the local Debutante Ball:

Me: Donna, (she is at the computer beside me) what's this in here for?
Donna: That's Troy's sister's debut. He's there, see? (She names Troy as the little boy in the front row. His sister is two rows behind him.)

Here the similarity between white-dressed supposed-virgin brides and white-dressed debutantes is significantly marked. (French named) Debutante Balls serve as psychocultural preparation for the kitchen sinks, buckets of nappies and husbands to come. That Donna has no questions about this process is apparent in her answering of my question. Femininity for the Donna of those days was a given.

Next I look at her older sister Margaret. In doing so I again consider possibilities in femininity and schoolgirl culture. In *THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA*, Margaret tells her readers it is 24th December. We know that she is in age (if not in body) a girl of twelve. And of course this is how we 'should' read her writing. But if I choose to read her as a young woman who is writing, then there are different implications. In this way Margaret's narrative develops as if she is not 'the child' waiting for her presents but the woman waiting for her man:

He suddenly saw me looking at him. He started to laugh softly. He said, "Come here." So I walked over to him. I sat on his knee and I rubbed my face on his beard. it tickled. he got me and took me into my room, put me to bed and gave me a nice big kiss. He told me it was a special kiss and I would not wake up until the morning and then he clicked his fingers and I was asleep.

Maybe my reading of this goes too far. (Margaret is twelve but she has a body like mine.) Whilst she would have every right to be outraged at my reading of her Santa story as a romance or worse, she nonetheless had earlier sat beside Eve as Eve wrote *DYEING LOVE*. Here is Margaret as she presented herself in writing a couple of months before writing *THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA*:

Profile
Name Margaret Williams
Age 12 Date of Birth 5/9/77
Likes Music, cows, icecream, textiles and Social Studies, Motorbikes
Dislikes Horses, boys, fried eggs, woodwork and electrical.
Height 5 foot 7 inchs
Weight 9 stone 4 pound.
Eye colour grey, birth mark in right eye
Hair brown
Favorite animals Cows and dogs.
Occupation Student
Future Occupation Textiles or Social Sudies teacher and maybe a History/Geog. teacher.
Ambishion to bungi jump off a bridge or parashut out of a plane

Perhaps my reading of *THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA* says more about my subjectivity than about hers, but somewhere between the two is a girl who struggles with phallocentric discourse. Margaret's profile is clear enough; but what she cannot say in it regards where she stands as a psyche. Conscious and unconscious positionings are not the same, though in poststructuralist theory they can co-incide. The femininities Margaret discursively takes up in her *PROFILE* are different from those of her *THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA*, regardless of how I read her fantasy. In *PROFILE* her femininity is adventurous and ambitious. In *THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA*, written at about the same time, it is affectionate and obedient.

I looked for these shifts in femininity amongst the writing of some of the other girls. Here I draw on a pronoun analysis of text. For Chloe, when aged eight (1989), the writer's device of using the personal 'I' shifts after six lines to the use of her own name. Having begun by saying, 'I was the best dog at training' she names herself as the dog, and continues not with the 'I' but with 'Chloe.' But being split in this way, between the 'I' whom she wrote about objectively and the 'Chloe' whom she sees more personally, presents her with a dilemma. What will happen to this dog when it/he/she grows up? Here the neuter choice becomes impossible as she herself is female:

I was the best dog at Training and I wun a metal and tropy and evey one was claping and I was backing and I was the happy's dog out off all and I was prald of all and when I went home I stuch my nose out and all the aver dog weer saed and the oner's wer saed too. The oner's of me wer prald and the oner's of me wer prald too Chloe oner's was the wier too and Chloe the dog was prald too and Chloe mate backing to her and Chloe nill had puppy's because she had a boy dog

What Chloe the writer had in mind at the start of the story was a boy dog, apparently, but having given it her own feminine name altered its fate. She ends the story in chaos, unable to resolve the she/he problem. Chloe the female dog cannot have puppies because she is male. Chloe the writer is stuck between the subject and the object. Being positioned as other denies her the biological outcome of siring puppies. However, Chloe writes of this not as a denial but as a positive for females: male dogs "nill had puppy's" (never have puppies). Looking at the first drafts of writing, such as this, is more productive of complex gender readings than are later versions which have been polished with the teacher's help. In this original version the splittings are visible.

Weedon (1987:150) says that there should be no fixing of femininity, masculinity or unconscious structures. Labelling a schoolgirl's written and real-life events as such is therefore inappropriate. The discursive practices that produce the things Chloe writes about and does, have themselves determined whether society sees her actions as gendered. For feminists, language is the place of subjectivity conflicts. But beyond and beside language, I am saying, are semiotics and discourses. For Chloe's close friend Lucy, the conflicts of gendered personhood appear to be fewer than for the other girls, at least from the data I have. Could the schoolgirl culture itself have constructed her as this kind of subject? Or is it my own position in relation to her that colours my vision? I start my answering process by looking at Lucy's writing corpus again:

THE CLOUD PERSON is gender-neutral, in terms of pronouns and in terms of action, apart from one use of 'her', which lets us know the protagonist is female. There is no subjectivity conflict here. *THE GHOST* is written from the same position. *SLEEPOVER* is as realistic as a real-life recount, except that more children than any parent would ask are

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invited to stay the night. Here Lucy plays, in realistic story, with Chloe, Brett, Aaron, Kylie and Dean. In *RANDY THE RAT* Lucy refers to a 'stupid dog called Justin', and describes herself as a successful burglar. In *PLAYING GAMES* she is unafraid of Martians. What Lucy may be doing by writing in these ways is writing herself into being untroubled by subjective positionings and gender conflicts. The field of femininity seems less problematic to Lucy than it seems to some of the other girls.

Earlier I asked myself if the schoolgirl culture could have positioned Lucy in this way. Historical data (Appendix D: Extra Descriptions) shows Lucy to have been attending the Ruralsville school longer than Eve, Chloe, Jane and Kylie. This means that when Eve and Chloe arrived at the school as new-girls older than Lucy, she was already in a position of power. Being able to reject Donna, who is her own age, and take up friendship with Chloe, who is a year older, is a measure of this. The femininity that Lucy adopts is, according to Mr B (1.12.92), manipulative and scheming. Refusing to talk with me about her writing file when I visited her at her house (5.12.92) could be explained by her inability in that situation to manipulate me. Refusing was her one possiblity of resistance to the discourse which I represented. But in this case, the supporting culture of schoolgirls was missing from the situation.

The data show that all of the Ruralsville girls have positions from which to speak. A Lacanian theory could suggest that the girls have retreated into narratives as the furthest removed from the (male) symbolic order of language. According to Lacanian theory, female subjecthood is controlled by male desire and male interests (Weedon 1987:148). These girls, with their man teacher, are sometimes defined and controlled by patriarchy. What can be seen from the writings is that they are sometimes aware of patriarchal potentials and they sometimes struggle with a range of gendered positions as writers.

Culture

I shall begin to discuss culture by bringing in two sets of threads not worked with before. These are the threads of the past and the threads of the future, (Appendix D: Extra Descriptions). Ruralsville Primary School has a very long history by Australian standards. Girls and women have been working at this school for one hundred and thirty years. At the end of this year, (1993), the school will be closed 'for good' (by the State Government, because Ruralsville is 'too small'). The published history of the school, which I cannot for ethical reasons publicize, names three of the girls in my study as school attenders in 1987. This jolts me into seeing the past as important. Even though none of the Ruralsville girls' families is originally from Ruralsville, and even though the girls will move on to somewhere else, there are links between their foremothers and themselves. These foremothers do not have to be literal: women have foremothers everywhere. Here is some gendered information I have compiled from the published past history of the school:

The first Ruralsville school committee comprised six men.The first Ruralsville teacher was a 15-year old woman, and the daughter of one of these men. In 1861 she taught 53 girls and boys as the school's only teacher. Her 53 students included 11 who were aged between 3 and 5. The male inspector of schools assessed her work as 'creditable' but recommended and instigated her replacement by a man. In 1875, when there were 300 students at the school, there was a male head teacher and two women 'assistant' teachers and two women student teachers working in three rooms. The school's first teacher, the woman, was employed as one of the assistants, and now an unmarried 29-year-old. During the first world war, girls at Ruralsville had to spend their 'playtimes' knitting sox, mittens and pyjama cords for soldiers in France. In 1927, when the school was much smaller and its only teacher was withdrawn, two girl students acted as unpaid teachers for several weeks.

Juxtaposed with this information (Appendix D) is the following description, made one year after my three year data gathering phase ended. Here Donna is the oldest girl in the school, and the age that Margaret and Eve were at the start of the project. I introduced my research notes from this day at the beginning of Chapter 1:

(1.12.92)
When a man I don't know comes to the door and starts chatting to Mr B, Donna gets up and helps Troy with his reading. After a while she gets herself a chair and sits on it with her feet propped up on Troy's chair. She gives me a bit of a grin when he can't get the words right.

What I omitted to say in the Chronology here is that Mr B was sitting at the front of the class helping Troy to read when the visiting man arrived at the classroom door. Donna effectively takes his place. Read in conjunction with Donna's feminine history of teacher foremothers, this makes me wonder what else she (and other girls) carry, as cultural traces. Donna is just three years younger than the school's first teacher. But her body looks fifteen. (Mine is nearly fifty). The 1861 teacher presumably got her job because of the 'old boys' network her father was in: he is named amongst the six men on the school's committee and she is described as his daughter. Here is the male mateship I observed 130 years later:

(1.12.92)

Mr B: (after some time, to the visiting man) Thanks Kev, catch you later.

Mr ?: Right-O mate. (he leaves without getting beyond the door of the classroom or meeting me)

Mr B: (to the children) Right-O, we've had a bit of an interuption. (Troy and Donna scuttle back to their desks without being told. They know the routine, and it's way past the time to begin story-writing.)

A culture of schoolgirls operates not only in relation to itself but in relation to cultures of men, boys and women.These cultures are historically constructed as the present. Traces of gendered cultures can also be seen in the sequel to Mr B's visit by his mate Kev:

(1.12.92)
(As soon as Mr B announces it, two of the boys make a dive for the computers. Jane goes over and helps the younger one with what he is writing.)

Butler (1990), Flax (1990) and Gallop (1982) direct me to a postmodern psychoanalytic that deals with complex discourses and a multiplicity of significations. The Ruralsville data provides this complex multiplicity. By speculating on the subjectivities of a group of girls, rather than on the relative simplicity of one girl only, I introduce notions of collectives. Moving psychoanalytic theory building into postmodernism ensures a diverse data base, an inconclusive analysis, and a dissolving of barriers between dichotomized knowledges. I intend to move it further by bringing in sociocultural dimensions.

Chloe and Lucy's resistance to my research stance is (temporarily?) resolved at the end of the field-work phase. Here, together with Jane, they turn to me, but against the woman who is their relieving teacher:

(19.11.91)
All three of the girls roll their eyes at me when Mrs X can't see them. They walk out sighing loudly. They have signalled that I am on their side, that I understand their positioning with the relieving woman teacher.

Here Mrs X has taken on the authoritarian role in order to get 'the children' to do what she wants. Because Mr B's classroom strategies are more subtle and his manner more relaxed, the girls object to Mrs X. Resisting dominance, by rolling their eyes and sighing loudly, requires the collaboration of bodies and the recruitment of their researcher. Mrs X's position is that of a woman who has adopted patriarchy because of perceived necessity;

and blatant authority over 'children' is one of its dimensions. Mr B, on the other hand, mostly rejects patriarchy; but at times this positioning is impossible for him given the expectations of the other adults who visit the school and given the nature of the published texts that are in the classroom.

Gallop (1982) warns that feminism and psychoanalysis have long been seduced by family-centred theories of power. Going beyond accepted psychoanalytic structures of the individual and the family allows for a different theory of femininity. I suggest accounting for subjectivity through culture rather than through mother-as-other. But looking at the Ruralsville girls in terms of a culture-centred theory of power is highly problematic if I am to take into account collective and individual psyches. And theorizing the feminine, as it is discursively constructed in the unconscious, is additionally problematic once the barriers between conscious and unconscious are removed by poststructuralist theory. However, in order to develop such a theory, the setting of this very small school may provide appropriate evidence.

One way I have begun to do this is by questioning the psychoanalytics of literacy events and practices. In defining literacy broadly, as anything to do with language in a literate culture, a range of significations is able to be questioned in relation to girl writers and their subjectivity. By interogating school-based data, rather than family-centred data, I am going against the practices of psychoanalysis. Further, by introducing the data of the everyday I go against (most) feminist practices of both psychoanalytic and poststructuralist theory. Although I am indebted to Walkerdine (1984a-1990), Davies (1989a-1990b) and Gilbert 1989c-1991), I have no models to follow in linking beginning writers' writing to feminist psychoanalytic theory.

What I am doing in writing this dissertation is producing another text, another discourse, another representation. This relates to Derrida's (1974) notion that meaning is dispersed and deferred in an endless play between signifier and signified. In the chapter following this one, I shall deal more explicitly with theories developed from my analyses. In the chapter I am concluding now, I have focussed on describing the data to investigate a culture of schoolgirls. Van Maanen (1989:1) says that ethnography is a written representation of a culture or selected aspects of a culture. In a way the Chronology already describes what it is that I saw at Ruralsville as gendered. But representation and description are not necessarily the same. What I have done in this chapter is write about the representations I have made (the Chronology), the representations the girls have made (the Writings) and the representations we made together (the Interviews). This has produced post-scriptions of these representations of this particular culture located in this particular site in this historically specific time.

This last section of Chapter 4 has considered social forms and practices of the girl-group, together with their patterns of events. The metaphors I described in the last section are a part of these events and practices. The culture of girlhood I have presented and described represents a living history. Here is a simple list of its key aspects. These girls:

1. Write about each other a lot
2. Play together, especially after school
3. Sometimes play with boys but don't want to be boys
4. Sometimes fight boys and sometimes are harrassed by them
5. Form close duos amongst themselves
6. Exclude other girls from friendship circles
7. Emphasize dressing, hair and body decoration
8. Write in diaries at home when they are older
9. Are bonded closely to their mothers
10. Have lots of slumber parties with each other
11. Change their minds
12. Choose to sit together in school
13. Spend time on horses, small motor bikes, climbing frames, the floor.

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CHAPTER FIVE

ENDINGS

This chapter is an ending point of the dissertation. It serves to pull together the theories that have been explored throughout the dissertation and to produce interpretations and proposals from the research. I have presented glimpses of seven different girls across four different years, the modes of spoken and written language, and a range of genres, semiotics and discourses. Over time, across modes and through biographies, discourses allowed for gendered positions to be taken up by this group of girls. These positions relate to the agencies, subjectivities and desires of the girl-group. It is language and discourse and semiotics that together re-construct changing subjective positionings. For these girls, the changes and reconstructions are produced through schoolgirl culture.

The proposals and interpretations presented in this chapter represent what the particular set of data allows for. They are presented in this chapter in the following non-discrete sections: writing, subjectivity, power, language, culture, resistance and femininity. My dissertation has operated on the frontiers of a range of sometimes contradictory disciplines and theories, attempting a productive series of theoretical insights rather than its own master theory. Throughout the dissertation I have presented a number of positions and descriptions against, from and through which feminist theories may develop. The questions I have been trying to pose have been at the level of theory, or rather, of theory's various discourses.The power offered by the entry into written language is a new potential control over objects of desire. By this analysis, girls and boys do not only become literate but become discursively produced subjects.

Deconstruction shows how gender is constructed by locating writing and discourse as cultural artifacts. Micro-ethnography allows discovery of discourses as they are produced in lively interactions, rather than as they appear in disembodied texts. In this way writing and discourse can be located as interactional productions. My selection of texts and discourses for description was aimed at developing feminist poststructuralist theories. I suggest that the Ruralsville writing is the inscription of subjects within everyday literacy practices. This inscription is not produced by the writers' rational discourses, but by the relations, intersections and significations of desire.

Writing

The Ruralsville girls, by their writing, commit themselves to contradictory discourses and specifically different subject positions. Over time, patterns of subjectivity emerge so that each girl differs from the others and yet is the same. The insertion into language which was a part of each girl's early 'childhood' is taken to new dimensions as she enters into the world of written language. Her re-defining and re-evaluating of femininty are constantly in operation, as one discourse competes with another for various definitions and values.

The place of literacy in the construction of gendered identity is complex. In capitalist patriarchal society, writing without publication has very low status. Publication means that the act of writing becomes a commercially validated practice. That young girls value their own narrative writing, enjoy re-reading it, and produce more of it than boys, could be because they do not view themselves as potential successes in today's society. On the other hand, these girls may simply be concerned with something other than going public. My thesis is that that something is their own selves.

The constructings of written meanings operate not only for future readers. They operate as well for the writers themselves, reading as they go. Beginning a rough draft, reconsiding what needs to be said and how to say it, discussing it with other people and presenting it finally, are all stages of playing/working with meanings and with posibilities. As I have shown, these girls are not only playing/working with the technicalities of writing and with the complexities of the English language, they are also exploring their positionings in gendered society. They do this by their narrative constructings of femininity, by their developings of various feminisms, and by their presentings of the images of the women they have met in reality or publication or imagination.

Girl writers can, by this, be seen as readers of other people's lives and of their own. These lives can be past, present, future and fantasy. Looking at what girls write can give glimpses of the worlds they inhabit, whether this inhabitance is imposed upon them or whether it is of their own choosing or imagining. It appears that these girls make choices about gender, and that they are making the choices with the support of the other girls at the school. Kylie, as a four-year-old beginning to write, knows no way to avoid the discourses of niceness. Later, she finds that there are ways to resist being positioned so that she must reproduce the status quo. When the girls choose to write physically side by side, they write with the support of the friend next to them, knowing that if what they write is on the edge of school acceptability, then the friend will produce writing that is similar, and so make the writing acceptable. Thus, one girl gives another the point of access to a gendered discourse of her own choosing.

The *L PLATE* stories, for example, operated as a series of resistances for all of the girls in the school. The four girls who eventually wrote an *L PLATE* story can be said to have produced a school-girl meta-text for the enjoyment and consumption of the other girls. For the listening/reading girls, this meta-text operated as a demonstration that such meanings were possible, that adults could be defied and that schoolgirls could triumph. Jane and Donna, as middle-aged primary school girls at that time (1989), reflect these gendered literacy events as they become older (1991). They do so with their writing and with their lives.

Entry into a literate culture brings its own repressions, according to levels of literacy skills and according to valuings of genres and discourses. Through this process of initial literacy, new concepts of self arise, and old concepts change. For girls, because of the ways they have been positioned by patriarchy, writing becomes a specific and primary site of subjectivity reconstruction. This follows from their babyhood positioning as beginning talkers, when according to Lacanian (1977) theory they were split by the symbolic order of language. This splitting involved seeing themselves as other in a patriarchal culture, which results in subjectivity dilemmas for them later as women. For girls beginning to write, this is a time of further orientation of the self to language and to gender orderings. But now for the first time, this orientation involves the social dimension of other girls. The mirror of writing, which allows for both subjectivity and objectivity to be contained in it, also reflects people who are gendered and aged like themselves.

Poststructuralist readings, with disruptions of binary positionings and expected meanings, allow for productions and reflexivity to be seen as part of the writing event rather than as a conflict for writers. That the positions taken by the girls in narrative are temporary can be seen by the differences between one week's writing and the next, and this is parallel to the changing of meanings in everyday language and events. In theory this is a measure of the temporary positioning of the gendered self. That narratives are constantly disrupted, not simply by the time restrictions and the physical restrictions of the school, but by the restrictions of a writer's subjectivity, is a poststructuralist view.

Writing is not a secondary representation of meaning but, for its writers, a primary and living text produced through discourse. In this way, writing operates differently for its readers and its writers, as it provides a site for the constructions and reconstructions of self. This site is to some extent constructed by the teacher and the boys at the school, but the major constructors are the girls who are around the writer. At Ruralsville, a small and closed group of girls recognized discourses and controlled identities. Writing became a means of validating and making tangible a range of feminine positionings. As beginning writers, these positions were newly available to these girls. In much the same way as spoken language enables those beginning to speak to have control over events and discourses, articulating written language is an equivalent stage in the determination of self.

At school, the literacy discourses of pedagogy construe the classroom writing of narrative as fantasy if it is preposterous, and as a real life retelling if it is not. What counts for the teacher is the production of individually crafted texts demonstrating an eventual proficiency in the conventions of syntax, genres, spelling, paragraphing, handwriting and word processing. But because of contemporary pedagogy, young writers at school are free to present and explore, through their writing, bids for power. They do this under the convenient cover of literacy learning, which discursively excuses desires for rudeness, over-dramatization, impossibility, lazyness and aggression.

That young girls write of such desires is a quality not only of their gendered subjectivity, but of their relation to language as beginning writers and proficient talkers, being positioned as both capable and not capable at the same time. In the *L PLATE* stories, for example, the girls' power is gained by their refusal to be cast as powerless objects within either my discourse or the school's. Instead they recast themselves as powerful subjects.

Writing, for these girls, is a set of practices through which they, as subjects, come to understand their lives. The struggles through which new subjects are created, are located at the entries into new discourses, which are represented in writing. The longing for something else signifies the material and psychic dimensions of subjective positioning. In presenting psychic dimensions I have attemped to engage with the psychoanalysis and the specificity not only of writing, but of young writer's lives.

Against phonocentric theories of (oral) language, a writing-based theory argues a semiotics based not on writing as written down speech but as different, dense and deliberately recorded. My theory of writing is thus a poststructuralist theory of decentred graphics, which accommodates the phonic, the semiotic and the discursive. Further, writing can be seen to function socially in relation to the production of the other written texts which contextualize it, and hence in relation to other writers. As a product of a discourse, writing designates for specifically subjected readers, matters of knowledge and power, fantasy and desire.

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The Ruralsville girls are all able to take up, in writing, some of the subjective positions which they cannot yet take up in real life. They do this by switching in and out of the variously gendered discourses they engage in as their everyday practices of schooling. In this way, the reading part of literacy can be theorized as conscious thinking, and the writing part of literacy can be theorized as transformation. Not dichotomizing literacy in this way results in space for a transformative merging of the receptive and the expressive, the in-coming and the out-going, the conscious and the unconscious. This is what I suggest happens within a school-based cultural construction of girlhood.

Following Foucault, and stressing the practices through which knowledges and discourses operate, has highlighted differences and contradictions. As a social practice, writing itself is a site for the constructions of ever-changing subjects. Taking new positions, in relation to old ones, is for beginning writers a constant process. The girl writer is regulated through a set of practices which inscribe her. These involve not just getting letters of the alphabet onto paper, but dressing in the morning for school, having breakfast with her family, riding her bike, playing in the schoolground, listening to her teacher read or talk, sharpening her pencils at the communal rubbish bin, sitting beside her (girl)friend.

In pedagogic discourses 'the child' is inscribed as the fictional object of literacy practices. This contrasts with the paradox of the literate subject finding herself in writing. In linguistics, signification is understood as related to its own internal systems of order. In poststructuralist theory, what counts as signification changes according to discourses and practices.

One of the most important aspects of writing is that it functions for its writers as a means of making the events of their lives livable. This is because fantasy storying becomes a part of their telling of events only through writing. These girls were not engaged in the making of narratives to any great extent except through writing. Spoken language, for them, was restricted to informational interactions and transactional dealings with other people. It was through these writers' expanding skills in written storying that life events and possibilities were able to be dealt with in a new way. For five-year-old Kylie, being able to write allowed her to articulate complex and changing subjective dynamics.

Towards the middle of primary school these girls took the matter of writing into their own hands. They then had a freedom to explore their own meanings and their own directions of thought. At this stage they produced what, for them, was a vast quantity of writing. The teacher dealt with how the writing was presented, how it was organized and how it developed as a tool for getting meaning making out of the spoken modes and into the

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written. The psychic and cultural functions of writing, were, for these writers, outside pedagogy.

Deconstructing pedagogy by presenting a decentred role of the teacher in the classroom (Chapter 4), allows for new theories of schoolbased 'learning'. The Ruralsville girls wrote as a form of play with feminine constructings. The binary of teacher/student is a structure I have attacked from my initial writing of the Chronology (4.2.89) onwards. Displacing the teacher in school practices allows for girls and boys to be their own teachers and their own learners. In this way, my poststructuralist theory of written language places the writer, and not the teacher, as central in the classroom. This then allows for feminist theories of agency, which suggests that the pedagogic imperative of literacy is transformed by girl writers into discourses of agency, fantasy and resistance.

The Ruralsville girls, as writers, have the right to speak and be heard. In this way they are agents/authorities. My research indicates that these girls author their own meanings and desires through the collective of the girl-group to which they belong. This collective operates in the classroom, the playground and away from the school. Writing gives beginning writers a way to do something about discourses they have met before. Girl writers from four to twelve invent and imagine, by their writing, what can be different.

Subjectivity

Whilst family relations may still be crucial to the earliest construction of subjectivity through fantasy and desire, the Ruralsville data shows that for girls at primary school, what counts are the other girls. The role of the mother in the construction of subjectivity is in this way decentred. I imagined, at the start of 1989, that my research would theoretically involve the girls' mothers much more than it did. However, I found that the social construction of gendered personhood is not only a matter of maternal *pas-de-deux* at home, but an interactive weaving together of many complex selves in relation to the complex selves of other girls at school. In this way the various representations of gender are incorporated into their writing practices. These practices involve much more than pens or printers marking paper. They involve activity and passivity, verbal and bodily language, silences and sounds.

In poststructuralist theory, as in the research data, these non-binary complementarities of activity/passivity, verbals/bodies and silences/sounds, are the sites and potentials of girlish subjugations and resistances. At school, psychic life seems to be embodied in the social events and practices of the classroom and the schoolground. The struggle to produce subjectivity thus seems to be both social and psychic, with narrative writing operating as a fantasy vehicle for beginning writers. Beginning writing and beginning schooling coincide, and this allows for the interaction of each on the other as the girl becomes more independent of her family.

I suggest that there is no essential femininity, only ways of becoming differently feminine, as subjects see particular investments for themselves in differences in positionings. As they position themselves differently, the girls appear to use metaphor as a processing of their perceptions of similarities between themselves as subjects and of the objects, places and events they know. Their metaphors are not natural and universal but culturally determined according to their experiences of girlhood: hence the stories about lipstick, horses, ghosts, sharks, driving cars, the scripted play with pillows, the sharpening at the bin. Through the metaphors of their writing, these girls share ideas about what it means to be a girl, and through this sharing their discursive meanings are taken up or put away.

Lacan's (1977) theory of the mirror provides a point outside the self through which a writer recognizes her self as subject. But in poststructuralist theory the mirror itself is a binary, with us (like Alice) on one side of it or the other. Yes, writers write of body and of orders of the imaginary, but the splitting of mind from body, and imaginary from real, is not necessarily so. Refusing a binary mirror involves an I/me coming-together. A traditional and structuralist psychoanalysis would have a writer's sense of omnipotence opposed by her infantile narcissism. One reading of the Ruralsville data is that this is the case. Another is that at the same time the I/me is extended, by writing, to the I/she function of writing as a socially literate practice. A third reading is that the writing of the I/you represents the writer's awareness of an audience of readers. A fourth is that none of these separations matter to a writer who accepts pronouns and subjectivities as a play of consciousness within a language offering personas.

Girlhood is not a fixed positioning but a time of trying on. Looking at herself in the (1940's triple?) mirror of her own writing, a girl can see multiple views of the subject she temporarily assumes. (My mother has one with winged sides, so that as I sit in its centre I go off into infinity from the left, the right and the back.) Writing allows for not only reflection of realities and of desires; it allows for their constructions. For this reason, what gets written is most important, and far exceedes notions of literacy as a skills-based entry point into the world of the literate. It also serves as an entry point into forms of femininity for girls.

In this way, it can be compared to the entry of the baby-subject into the world of verbal language, an entry-point crucial to psychoanalytic understandings of womanhood to come. That the subject also splits at the time of entry into writing is a suggestion of my thesis. These splits may be seen in the writings of the Ruralsville girls, who try on a series of femininities and feminisms as part of their day to day schooling. These splittings are multiple, changing and (sometimes) laughing.

Over a four year time span, patterns emerged for each of the seven girls. These patterns locate the girls as differently gendered subjects. Their writing is both a documentation of these locations and a construct/critique. Harding's (1986) framework of gender operates as symbolism, as structure and individual thinking. I have tried to show through my descriptions (Chapter 4) that writing can reveal the social meanings, hidden symbolics and structural agendas of young girls. There is, however, no 'girl' and no 'girl's experience'. Although at Ruralsville there are not girls of different races and different ethnic cultures, there are girls of different ages, different experiences, different families and different bodies.

Femininity is a series of categories within experiences, interests and desires. My research represents a search for common threads which connect the diverse experiences of a particular group of young girls and which values their experiences. Seen as a discursive undertone (Spivak 1985), the girls' on-going conversations with each other, through their writing, deconstructs the patriarchal/phallocentric discourses of the school. The sense of female conspiracy, in which I was sometimes included, was a constant factor for these girls. Their writing, along with their spoken and unspoken traditions, undertone and undermine what else is happening.

Feminist poststructuralist theorists question the notion of femininity/masculinity as oppositionally organized (Davies 1989b, Grosz 1990c, Spivak 1985). Identifying power and knowledge relationships as within discursive practices allows space for this questioning of gendered subjectivity. Western society in the 1990s has not yet managed to make gender a non-issue, and masculinity also is in need of deconstruction/reconstruction. My thesis provides evidence that gender is socioculturally built through language. That girls and boys are culturally different from each other may be a measure of the psychic patternings available to them through written language.

The Ruralsville girls consistently provide self-defined (but not self-originating) feminine qualities for each other. Together, they form opinions of what is appropriate and what is not. This is demonstrated by the clothes they wear to school, by their hairstyles, their play and their writing choices. These choices constitute their subjectivity. The way that their subjectivity functions is by their interpretations of the world around them, and they make these interpretations via their access to variously gendered discourses.

Within the Ruralsville writing, the range of gendered discourses includes those of niceness, complaint, passivity, resistance, success, naughtiness, empowerment, denigration, violence and maternity. Examples of niceness are Kylie's *KANGAROO* or Jane's *TO-DAY OUR SCHOOL RECEIVED A NEW VICTORIAN FLAG*. Lucy breaks with this discourse after she begins 'To-day is sports day', by adding 'I hate the hurdles because I have to jump over the giraffes'. Here she resists the nice-girl discourse and replaces it with one of complaint. This replacement comes after she has had time, as a writer, to consider what it is that she really wants to say about the sports. Having the other girls around her allows her the possibility to make this meaning.

Later, Chloe is more blatantly resistant in her writing about *THE JUNK CAR*. Here she begins by positioning herself passively, as a girl listening to a teacher talking. Then, after she has written and considered, 'I was nearly knocked over', and 'Yes Sir' as a reply to a teacher, she writes, 'I ran out the door ignoreing Mr B'. This girlish naughtiness, was an available meaning because of the openings created by the other girls, whom Chloe had seen writing against the expected discourses of the school. Her story ends with 'We fitted a propellor on the engine.' Here she has written herself into ability, as together with a girl friend, she achieves success in the male dominated territory of motor car fixing. This writing experience, for Chloe, has enabled her to move within it from discourses of passivity to discourses of empowerment.

Similarly, four-year-old Kylie (1989) by her own handwriting of the letters *I A* to denote 'I hate Mr B', intended denigrating the man who was her teacher. When he comes to scribe whatever it is that she wants to write, because of her lack of writing skills, she asks him to write for her 'Mr B is a good teacher.' Shifting from a position of abled defiance to one of disabled compliance is her political decision. However, Kylie tells me (1.6.92) 'I did this stupid picture of him deliberately.' And in her drawing is the meaning intended, but not dared, in the written text. Kylie knew at the time that the older girls at the school understood the position her drawing spoke from. Four years later she knows that I understand it.

This movement through discourses, and from passivity to power, or from timidity to fearlessness, is a feature of the girls' writing. Donna, for example, wrote at the age of seven, 'What I don't want to be. A doctor. because you see everyone's blood and gizzards.' This was followed some years later with her *NIGEL THE SHEEP*, with its blood and guts celebration; and her subsequent 'Six smelly fat feet. I cut them off with a big sharp knife.' Her sister Margaret, then at the same age as this older Donna, wrote 'I would like to be a Mum because I could smack my kids'. This was a serious response to the teacher-set topic that day, though she sets it off with a 'child-centred' aggression acceptable to patriarchal discourses of femininity. In *BORED* she describes herself as not being able to manage guns, though she resolves this by quitting and going home.

For Margaret, the original writing of the *L PLATE* story was an important step towards her resistance of passivity and conformity. Previously, she had written in *ALIENS* about an abduction followed by its resultant punishment from a father. Later, in *WHEN MY PARENTS GOT DIVORCED* she presents herself as the capable one who looks after her mother who has been beaten up by her father. Here the discourse of the happy patriarchal family is questioned, as Margaret struggles with the problem of how daughters can continue relationships with fathers in the face of divorce events: an imaginary event, she tells me three years later as we look at her writing together after school one night.

These examples of girlish positionings show awareness and questionings of patriarchal discourses. In each of them, the girl writer can be seen to choose different meanings, different either from what she originally intended as she began the writing, or different from what she wrote some months or years earlier. This exemplifies the notion that meanings are vulnerable at a particular moments (Weedon 1987:86). For the Ruralsville girls, those moments are related to the temporary positioning of the other girls, and to the chances for reflection given by the writing process at the school.

Finding a point at which a girl changes subjectivity has been possible, in retrospect, because of the research potential in Writings and the Chronology combined with the researcher's first-hand knowledge of people, places and events. But what I shall say now goes into into the basket of psychoanalytic speculations. Here Kylie (5.3.90), aged five, subjectively differentiates herself from the three schoolboys her age. She writes that she has blue eyes and blond hair and wears lipstick. The three younger boys have no come-back to this, and simply describe themselves by eye or hair colour. The four pieces of writing are displayed on four large cards hanging from the classroom ceiling.

Of course, for a boy to write that he has a penis would be totally unacceptable to school discourses, and Kylie knows that this is so. In psychoanalytic terms she has found a phallic alternative. Wearing the lipstick gives her the power she needs. Femininity, at this moment for Kylie is a big plus. I wonder if she will ever equate the public lips with the

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private ones. I also wonder what she makes of the T-shirt she wears (22.10.90) which reads 'If you think I'm cute you should see my Dad.' I can't ask her the question, but she asks me how I like her hair (22.10.90). She sounds just like her mother. Without Mr B at the school the next time I visit it, she defiantly throws a rubber from one side of the classroom to the other. Mr B's absence allows Kylie to position herself as other to the 'child' constructed by the patriarchal discourse of the relieving teacher. Two years of schooling and being always with older girls have caused many changes to Kylie's feminine positioning. The effect of variously competing discourses is to produce the agentic person she is at this moment of rubber-throwing.

For the girls at Ruralsville, their gendered selves are constantly formed and reformed by the language they speak and the language they write and the potentials they see in discourses. This is in line with the Lacanian model of psychoanalysis, which sees the female subject as non-stable because of the decentring of rational consciousness and rational discourses. According to Kristeva, this means that there is a blurring of object and subject, and we can see this in the writings of the Ruralsville girls. Here what they say oscillates between rational and irrational discourses, real-life fact and fantasy, self as object and self as subject. In one small story, all of these elements can be seen as the girls struggle with their own positioning. The decision regarding grammatical subjectivity/objectivity of the writer is made again and again within the one narrative. This appears to reflect the non-grammatical subject's shifts and struggles.

Eve, in *SLIME THE TIP GLOBE* writes at first, 'Slime the tip globe was a garbage monster' but ends up six lines later with 'I don't know why but that is how I feel.' What began as a description of Slime ends as a description of herself, and she has separated the two. Brett, in contrast, writes within the same genre and with the same voice throughout his six line story (19.3.90). 'Once Matthew and I ran away from home,' he begins, and he ends just as dispassionately, 'it was freezing cold.' Here the boy has no problems in maintaining his constant position as subject, whereas the girl of the same age switches subject positioning mid-story.

Whilst examples such as this may be co-incidences and prove nothing, there are no examples of boys writing of themselves as objects amongst the stories they gave me. There are many instances of boyish solidarity, many action packed adventures around themes of sport, camping and vehicles.

Justin, who gave me more writing than the other boys, produced two stories which both began specifically about a motor bike and both ended with romantic heterosexual love: 'I

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met a girl and fell in love and the same thing happened to Matthew'. This matter-of-fact description that ends the second motor bike story has none of the complexities of the subject positionings explored by girls' writing of the same themes.

The Ruralsville writings by the girls and the boys can be seen as a textual staging of knowledge. This knowledge regards the multiple positioning of the subject in relation to those of others. I have tried to not be the Great Interpretor, but rather to suggest what the possible meanings could be. Relatedly, I do not claim to have exhausted the possibilities of the theories introduced in relation to the data. I have tried to indicate something of the subjectivities that are mine, and to produce a related and postmodern blurring of academic/non-academic genres.

Following Kristeva (1981:265), the language I have theorized is sometimes at the centre of psychoanalytic study, and regards a writing subject making and unmaking herself. Following Derrida (1976), my efforts have produced, instead of a specific thesis of subjectivity, discourses on discourses. These are grounded by the case of the seven girls within the girl culture at Ruralsville. The subjective resistances of these girls move back and forth between various contesting discourses in order to interupt them (Johnson 1987, Spivak 1987). Similarly, what I am doing now, as a writer, interrupts my selected academic range of theoretical discourses by placing one against the other. (By having decided against the paginated binary of the footnote system for this dissertation, I accept the challenge of integrating texts within texts, without undue use of brackets but with the markers of placing, italics, bold and capitals).

Power

Schoolgirls coming into their own sense of power enter into a new relationship with their contextual worlds. This results in their ability to analyse their own powerlessness, to recognise their oppressive forces and to collectively act to change their conditions. The fantasies and facts produced by the girls as writing allow them much more than engagement with the literacy technology resulting in their handwriting or computer print-outs. The constant drafting, and the quantity of the writing produced as fantastic narrative, offers a different form of power. This is the power of play with possibilities, of differences in social positioning and of the subjectivities of others.

Writing is in this way a site of power. Through the framing of the imaginary, writers can possess whatever they want. Against the fear/dislike of illiteracy which beginning writers face, is the desire to know, to be empowered by escaping from the limits and the lack of status in talk. The supposed permanency and status of writing, and the desire to be read by others, resulted for these girls in productions of not only facts but metaphors.

Patriarchal forms of power are produced both institutionally and individually. My research shows ways by which such power is produced and reproduced by the girls themselves and by their school. In post-structuralist terms this struggle which engages the girls is seen as a battle for the signified. What is signified, by discourses these girls select, then enables the contesting or reproducing of power relations. Such relations involve the emotions, the conscious and the unconscious mind and the choices made regarding the body.

One reading is that the power of the dominant discourses at school is strong, and that going against them requires a solidarity which the Ruralsville girls give to each other. They do this by together writing their own discourse of girlhood, which then becomes the acceptable school-based text for their constructings of subjectivity. Because of his theories of literacy, Mr B accepts the girls' narrative writings, which then operate against the other published texts of the classroom and the gendered discourses of adulthood that are around them. Chloe and Lucy, for parts of the 1990-1991 period, rely on each other for support in their resistant stance against my research role. Finally (19.11.91), they rely on me to join their resistance against the discourses presented to them by the relieving teacher, Mrs X.

Another reading is that for these girls the dominant discourse is what they see in 'sit-coms' on television, and that for them the 'naughty girl' is an acceptable cultural positioning. This reading requires a different view of resistance and confinement within dominant hegemonies Anyon (1983). Resistance can thus be viewed as opposition to feminism or to popular culture, not only to the discourses of the school. In this way, Kylie's hitting out at me when her sister had the baby (May 1991) is her resistance of 'good girl' positioning, as are Lucy's and Chloe's rejections of the 'helpful girl' role regarding my research (1991).

Foucault's theory is that discourses can be contradictory and multi-strategic. In viewing discourses of power, not as opposed to discourses of powerlessness, but as complex tactics operating in the field of relations, the Ruralsville girl-group can be seen to try out various strands of feminist strategies and positions. Resistance through togetherness is one such example. But in order for them to resist dominant patriarchal subject positionings, they need to have been exposed to at least some degree of feminist discourse. Eve (1989) provided a measure of this for the other girls, as did Lucy (1991). This provision of feminist discourses, which Kylie begins to demonstrate during her first year at school with her 'I (h)A(te)' writing, is an early stage in her production of alternative forms of knowledge.

The physical layout of the school is an indication of the kinds of discourses likely to be contained in it. For the Ruralsville girls, moving outside to work away from the constraints of the building offers further possibilities for resistance. Margaret and Eve, for example, first devised the L PLATE stories in conversation at the back of the bike shed. Outside the school building contains few historic overtones of teacher dominance for schoolgirls. Chloe and Lucy's throwing of the tomatoes onto the roof of the shelter-shed is an example of resistance to the usual behaviour of the classroom. This resistance is possible because the girls are outside and away from the teacher and the boys. Here it is triggered because of the gap between the positions of subject offered to the girls inside and outside the classroom. Their interests here are to devalue the school's growing of tomatoes, to let me know that they consider me of no authority, to demonstrate their own positioning as the most senior girls in the school, and to challenge the dominance of the school's teacher in his absence. Inside the building none of this could happen because of the discursive positioning of students in relation to teacher and classroom space. Outside, the space is theirs, as is evidenced by the schoolgirl and schoolboy hand-writing on the top of the shelter-shed wall.

Power is therefore relative. Given appropriate sites or contexts, then discourses and hence subjectivities can be changed. And changing the setting or the context is important for the effectiveness of challenges to dominant power. Points of resistance are present everywhere in power networks (Foucault 1984). My thesis here is that such points are apparent to young girls from almost the beginning of their schooling. But notions of resistance themselves depend on the discourses of which they are a part, as I shall show at the conclusion of this chapter.

The creation of a schoolgirl discourse through writing can be read as resistant action following theories of power. Kylie, who at first reproduces the niceness she sees as appropriate for a girl of her age, later writes almost nothing (22.10.90, 30.10.90, 25.2.91). This is not simply because her technical skills are underdeveloped. It is because the meanings she is able to make through writing are as yet inappropriate for what she wants to say. After two years (28.5.91) Kylie is freed, by writing, to explore a range of subject postionings and exercise a measure of control over the exploring process. This freedom she gains is because of the other girls at the school, who constantly show her that these things are possible.

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Seen as a place where a network of discourses is articulated, the Ruralsville school is a site and an institutionalization of particular knowledges. These knowledges, for the girls there, include how to variously resist and how to gain power. Because of the conflicting subject positions and practices offered to her by her school, and especially by the other girls there, each girl becomes a thinking, social agent capable of resistances and innovations. She also becomes a subject who is able to reflect discursive relationships and to choose from the discursive options available. In this way she constantly redefines, changes and produces her own subjective positions. Resisting, subverting and changing the discourses of the school means that the girls sometimes make other discourses available to themselves. In this way, subjectivities are constituted by selected discourses, and the gendered positions the girls do not want are resisted. In rejecting unwanted overtones around them, and in creating their own gender meanings by their writing, these girls agentically construct particular femininities. Sometimes their writing articulates the positions from which they may not yet be able to speak or to act. In this way, the writing may serve as an advance sign or a rehearsal.

Language

In their written language the girls contest the meanings of the world around them, sometimes offering their own alternatives in place of them. Eve, in *DYEING LOVE*, struggled with the desires for success with boys and the experiences of girl-girl friendship. Lucy refused the stereotyped discourses around her and produced her own stories of fact, fantasy and feminine strength. The articulation, through spoken language, of the challenges and resistances made by the Ruralsville girls is clear also in the Chronology. Chloe, for example, chucks tomatoes on the shelter shed roof; Donna brings Justin back into school for justice after she's been fighting him outside at playtime.

The fixing of meaning happens constantly within subjectivities. The political possibilities of rational language are that it marginalizes semiotics in order to preserve the apparent stability of the unitary subject, and the status quo of patriarchy. Reading the Ruralsville writings in the light of what else happened and what else was there, takes semiotics into account and shows meaning to be not fixed in rational language, but growing and changing. The symbolic order of subject/object and girl/boy, in language, can be seen to be both patriarchal and phallocentric. Against this are the struggles of the girls to break out of this language ordering, and construct for themselves a different set of meanings.

Within the girls' writings are resolutions of the subject/object split. Kylie in *THE CIRCUS* writes initially in the third person, 'One day Justina went to live with her cousin

Troy.' Two sentences later she has slipped into the first person singular with, 'I rode a horse and it danced for me.' Here she has written herself into the story, in the same way as Eve did with *SLIME THE TIP GLOBE*. Language, for these girls, goes beyond the rational and beyond the divisions between grammatical subjects and objects. It does this by being the site of the repressed meanings of the unconscious, and of the significations that deal with gendered and symbolic discourses. Lacanian theory holds that for a girl, the babyish movement into the symbolic order of (spoken) language becomes, in a patriarchal society, a repressive experience for her. She then has to construe herself as other, as object.

My theory is that as she moves into the the symbolic order of written language, during primary school, she has the chance to re-define herself as subject. This means that whether or not she has, as Lacan says, defined herself as object in her pre-literacy days, she can, by being a writer, shift to a positioning of herself as subject and as central. In addition, she has the chance, because of the nature of narrative text, to write semiotically. Writer access to literary genres (but not expository or recount genres) opens the way for meanings that can be understood by others attuned to the meanings of the unconscious.

Semiotics are at their strongest in non-rational discourses such as poetry, art and religion (Kristeva 1986), where aspects of language such as rhythm and intonation are especially important. The Ruralsville girls, whose poetry writing has not yet progressed beyond simple rhymes, cannot be said to have explored non-rational discourse in these modes. However, they do appear to be exploring it through the rhythms and intonations of playground chanting (30.5.89), of limerick writing (14.12.89) and of song (Nov. 1989). None of these forms of language is amongst the boys' repertoires.

According to Derrida's principle of *différence* (1978) the attempt to fix meaning and to eliminate competition is impossible given the nature of language, which itself constantly moves between meanings. This means that, according to poststructuralist theory, signifiers always have plural possibilities and realities. This theory enables discourses to function so that a girl has choices regarding her gendered positioning. She is seen as not merely a passive site of discoursive struggle, but a constantly active one. And this activity happens through language.

A characteristic of poststructuralist theory is its resistance to definition, a characteristic related to its assertion that essence does not exist. For theorists, acknowledging this lack of essence means not looking for what girlhood is or what it was. In this way poststructuralist theory displaces the humanist theory of language as transparent and singularly 'meaningful'. Similarly, the essence of the corpus of writing I have collected at

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Ruralsville is unable to be qualified. Instead of a theory of language, I am theorizing discursive meaning in everyday life as co-constructed, open, complex and changing.

Culture

As is Johnson, (1993:34), I am interested in 'forms of identification culturally available to and socially desirable for women'. Seeing what transpired for girls at primary school was not as easy as it seemed. Analysis of static photographs, such as the Ruralsville debutants' ball or the school's annual official photograph, at least meant that the protagonists stayed still for long enough for me to make some kind of assessment of what was happening. Dealing with life events which necessarily engaged my own (encultured) subjectivity, both at the time and in retrospect, was by some calculations an unwise methodology.

From its feminist poststructuralist framing, my ethnographic representation of a culture (The Chronology) reads as a highly selective description of sites and events constructing girlhood. As such, it is highly particular, and, I hope, hauntingly personal (Van Maanen 1988:ix). Focussing on all of the girls in a school, as a group and as individuals/subjects, allows for the investigation of the impacts they have on each other. By looking at girlhood as a whole and not only at a series of biographies, femininity and its constructs can be seen as patterns. Reading the three primary sets of data following feminist psychoanalytic theories (Barrett 1992:459) introduces the social construction of meaning to theories of subjectivity.

Teenaged girls' own private culture is characterized by a sense of solidarity between girls and particularly between best friends (McRobbie 1978:106). My research shows that these characteristics also mark the culture of girls before the teen age. Primary school girls have their own social history, and school processes and products of writing serve to strengthen their cultural links. Text production is intertextual, as it repeats and reflects from one girl to another. In this way the girls, through their writing, can be seen to become like each other. Operating in relationship is a feature of these girls' femininities, which use the social production of writing as a site for their construction. That the girls in this way experience the texts they construct, is apparent from the written texts they later produce, and from the ways by which they talk about their writing after the events (The Interviews).

The pairing of Eve/Margaret (1989), Lucy/Chloe (1990, 1991), and occasionally Donna/Jane (1991) allows them to write as a duo, each being conscious of what the other is doing and gaining personal power by being part of a double entity. Reading this as a feminist construct is dangerous though, as it can perhaps read as a preparation for patriarchal marriage, where the woman provides most of the empathy and work for the relationship. That the boys were not seen to form same-sex pairing relationships could mean boys' lack of discursive access to reciprocal friendship.

The agent of discourse, who in my research is the writing subject of poststructuralist theory, is not herself the origin of her discourses. Intertextuality, and the lack of author-authority in meaning, point jointly to this. Although the girls are the ones who do the writing and the talking, this writing and talking are not the results or the resources of girlish manufacture alone. No individual discourse, and hence no agent of it, operates alone. In practical terms, this means that the Ruralsville girls, along with their teacher and the Me that was in the Chronology, were constrained and positioned to say and write the things that they did. This is because of the discursive history of girls in schools, of women in society and of institutionalized pedagogies of teaching and learning. It is also because we constantly break away from the gendered mass of historic and sociological positioning that lies behind us. This is a quality of ever-changing culture.

The Lacanian (1977) theory of the subject's entry into the sybolic world of language appears to be the world of spoken language. This relates to a theory of writing as the following possibility: writing offers engagement with the fantasies denied by spoken language. By this theory, the girl who begins to write finds a mechanism of voicing the desires controlled up until now by (the spoken) symbolic order of language. The Other, or the lost desired object of fantasy, waited for the possibility of irrationalism, which fictional narrative is able to cater for.

The Other of transactional and expository genres is poetics and story. My theory is that for schoolgirl writers these literary genres constitute the subjectivities denied expression by their earlier illiteracy, but possibly 'received' in pleasurable (feminine?) moments of 'being read to' (at home and at pre-school or day-care). The writing of narrative fiction allows girls to engage with the production of their own and their girl friends' conscious and unconscious desires. The culture of primary school girls produces a practice whereby fantasy can be explored alongside realism, so that each intersects with the other without clear-cut distinctions.

My understanding of the girl-writers at Ruralsville is that their lives and their fantasies are inextricably intertwined. Their narrative writings, which operate through a series of textual devices, produce meanings through which they can deal with their desires. The Chronology and the Writings can be read as a play of desire, where the girls experience jealousy, misery, joy, inadequacy, togetherness and power. In practice there is an enormous network of desired and feared qualities operating within school literacy agendas. Girls come to desire qualities in themselves that are different from those they desired in preceding months and years. Their control of their own lives happens partly because of the sets of fantasies operating in advance of the actual possibilities of events. This is articulated by the girl-group as a whole, so that each girl becomes her own subject in relation to the group and because of a collaborative constructing of femininity.

Throughout this dissertation I have avoided the use of the term 'child/children', unless my meaning was 'the child' as constructed in patriarchy (Walkerdine 1986). The problem here is that 'the child' is conveniently non-gendered, but this renders both 'the girl' and 'the boy' invisible. By ignoring difference there is much to be lost (Yates 1993:48-70), as I hope can be seen by my focus on girls. Further, by positioning the men and women at Ruralsville as off-centre I locate them as peripheral to the culture of schoolgirls. This allowed space for the girls themselves to take centre stage. At the same time I locate myself as one of those in the centre, in theory, in the Chronology and as the reader of the Writings. I see this location as unavoidable, but also as indicative of the way each girl-writer in the study saw herself. Additionally, I hope to get rid of some of the divisions not only between the researcher and the researched, but the young girl and the old girl. This fits with my theory of childhood/adulthood as a patriarchal binary.

As the unquestioned 'adult' boss-of-the-school, Mr B occupied a position of dominance which he mostly chose to relax into. He was liked, valued, joked with, confided in and followed. When he was away on leave, his replacements needed strategies to make 'the children' do what they were told. Mrs X, for example, positioned the girls as far removed from herself. This resulted in their secondment of me as a surrogate girl, although in age and in sex Mrs X and I were parallel. My alliance with the girls may have been problematic for Mrs X. Being a girl is not always easy for a woman, though I suggest that this is a binary that poststructuralists should try to abolish. Reinscribing the word 'girlish' as being unashamedly all right is a big step for feminism.

The Chronology and its descriptions (Chapter 4) have placed Mr B and the other 'adults' as a context for the events and sites of productions. This is contrary to the many studies and practices of schooling which consider teachers and what they do as of greatest importance in classrooms. I suggest that what is important is what girls and boys do for themselves. In this regard, I was interested that there seemed to be no links at all between the story Mr B read aloud to the 'children' each Tuesday and the writing they produced immediately afterwards. My thesis is that because of the schoolgirl culture a particular variety of gendered positionings was available to each girl. It was their own production of writing which facilitated the girls' various positionings regarding femininity. Splitting themselves into complex and eccentric subjects was a part of the experience of schooling for these girls.

Splitting has become a word which I no longer want to use in this context. We 'do the splits', we 'have split ends', we 'split in two' during childbirth. Splitting in women's experience simply isn't what seems to be happening as a girl-writer becomes a multitude of femininities constructing herself as various subjects across time and discourses. The culture of women/girls is marked by the non-unified subject, but it seems that this is a long way from being torn, especially by others and painfully so. We need a word with celebration, laughter, body, multiplication, persona, transience, rehearsal.

The Writings show that none of the seven girls was always the same, unpuzzled by gender possibilities, consistently stable. What these girls wrote, and the conditions by which they did so, is joking, flamboyant, repetitious, boring, routine, amazing. This reflects the eccentric discourses which allowed for the production of such artifacts. It also reflects a particular girlish culture. I hope that I have made clear that who writes is more important than what gets written, and that (even written) language is a transient that cannot be grasped. So too is the unconscious which I have guessed about.

Kristeva (1981:272) describes a non-linguistic view of language, and says such language really exists only in discourse. In taking psychoanalytic descriptors, and in stretching the writing so that the body herself can be seen to be the writer, the culture of schoolgirls at Ruralsville writes itself into psychic being. Seeing the writer as a physical girl-form is important not only to my memory of the events, but to the writer's siting of herself. The site of the construction of subjectivity is not the classroom but the body.

In Chapter 4 I examined large discursive chunks of language rather than small and systematically organized units. This was an attempt to work as far away from language itself as possible, and into the imaginary, the discursive, the play, the semiotics, the signifying power of the unconscious. In this way, I have studied not language alone but its discursive frames of reference. As an intermediary between language and discourse (Urwin 1984:283), these frames have allowed for glimpses of a culture. The reference points taken by the girls are those of conflicting femininities, unresolved directions for power, uncertainties about their futures but enjoyment of their present. Never being absolutely committed to a particular feminine position, yet always constantly having to take positions, these girls seek out the middle ground (Grosz 1988:100). Because making language requires a stance, writers change stances to show themselves that belonging is a trick.

The metaphors in writing function as signs to intentions, the unsaid. Here for a moment the writer tests the landing point, laughs, and takes off again. I badly wanted to call this dissertation 'The Fuckin' Moles', quoting the words of the boy who described 'the other girls' in his note to Eve. I could picture a book cover with a black and white school photo of this year's eleven 'children' smiling at the photographer who got them into two neat rows with the little label at the bottom in the middle saying the name of the school and big Mr B standing on the side and across the top where the sky is the book title. Of course, this is sensation. But in the store room one day Donna and Jane asked me 'What are all them things on your neck?' (19.2.91). And there they were: the moles, the hated signs.

None of this last paragraph fitted together until its moment of writing, which is why I am telling such a long-winded anecdote in a dissertation. If this is how metaphor functions (remindingly and replacingly) for me, then maybe it functions like this for others. Why did I select a metaphor that relates so closely to my own body? What is the significance of the mole/moll's English history as a word for a prostitute? Has schoolboy culture passed it down the centuries to a one-teacher school in Australia? Didn't I know this etymology when I left the mole out of my analysis of the note Eve was given in the classroom? (Chapter 4) Why did my conscious mind forget? This metaphor of the mole comes from life-text, from boy's writing and from history; and resistance and acceptance of being the whore has been theorized by Walkerdine (1986:74) from her observation of a six-year-old. The dichotomized discourses of nice-girl/bad-girl metaphorically confront not only the girls at Ruralsville. Boys also struggle; and so do women.

Lather (1989:16) says that 'power works via exhibition, observation, classification'. Eve's note-writer exhibits his power by producing tangible evidence of girls' inferiority. Writing has made visible the observations of the writer and allowed for the classifying of girls. The boy's description of girl-culture as mostly moles but some not-moles is discursively framed by his phallocentric culture. Getting girls out of this framing requires them to observe, classify and exhibit for themselves. My thesis is that writing can enable them to do this. Eve (1992) wants me to include in my appendices some of her writing since she left primary school. She powerfully asserts herself as subject and knows that writing is a way for her to make her mark. Writing herself in to the discourses of others, in a way of her chosing, is an option her literacy has given her. In describing the writing of Eve and the others, what I have tried to do is to show them inscribing themselves.

It was never my intention to make of them an object. The primary object that I produced was the Chronology and the secondary object is this dissertation. But in poststructuralist theory the notions of subject/object and of primary/secondary dissolve. I hope that, by writing, my own many voices are apparent. These voices parallel those within the girl-culture. Plural discourses mark schooling, after-schooling, playing, and writing. In questioning the subject, together with her conscious/unconscious, I have tried to create a multi-voiced, multi-theoretical and multi-centred text. In these ways, my thesis becomes reinscribing otherwise.

Resistance

In Chapter 1 I introduced feminist notions of resistance and stated that resistance relates to 'the building of a critical hegemony for girls ' (Weiler 1988:52). Following Hartsock (1983) and Chodorow (1989) I explored the potential of the Ruralsville data as regards the 'female construction of self in relation to others' (De Lauretis 1990a:121). The Ruralsville data is very different from that of Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer (1990:5), who found teenage girls 'resisting not the loss of innocence but the loss of knowledge'. Resisting patriarchy by relating to the other girls is sometimes seen to happen with the girls in my study, and it is possible that 'the fate of girls' knowledge and girls' education becomes tied to the fate of their relationships' (Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer 1990:24). But I have tried to go further than investigate social development, and certainly I have not wanted to elaborate on 'stages of cognitive, moral, social and emotional growth' (Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer, 1990:319) or 'the truths of psychological theory' (Gilligan 1982:62). By linking sociological notions of feminist resistance (Davies 1989c, 1990b, Gilbert and Taylor 1991) to psychoanalyses, I tried to further investigate the construction of the subject. Following Weiler (1988:40), I sought to 'explain or understand the lives of girls or women' by going beyond theories of resistance as 'counter-school or anti-social actions'. Additionally, I sought not only to see girls' resistance as resistance to feminist discourses (Davies 1989b), but to consider its diversity.

Although I believe that resistance can result in many actions, and that one's own subjective positioning determines whether discourses are understood as resistant or not, I try to theorize the construction of resistance, and see whether theories of socioculture can be linked to theories of psychoculture. This may mean reading a girl's (writing) action as resistant of feminist discourses because of desires which are not directly attributable to patriarchy or phallocentrism.

As a poststructuralist following Derrida and Foucault, I seek to theorize not whether a piece of writing is resistant, but how it came to be so. In this sense I not only consider the girls' oppositions of domination but research their counter-culture (Yates 1993:59), as do Walkerdine and Davies. In considering a culture of schoolgirls as constructive of resistances I investigate the place of fantasy, desire and the symbolic in that construction. I consider 'patterns of domination' in the girls' resistances (Christian-Smith 1990:9), and explore these patterns as a psychoanalytic, which I hope may lead to explanations (but not in this thesis) of why some women/girls choose the irrational over the rational when it comes to life-choices. Speculating on the functionings of the unconscious thus brings a postmodern dimension to feminist theories of resistance. The existence of repressed desires (Freud, Lacan, Walkerdine) thus has potential for further theorization. My thesis is that this applies to girl's resistant writing.

What I try to do is dependent on my understanding of what knowledge is considered legitimate in/from an historically specific place (Ruralsville) and in an historically specific time (now). This follows Bakhtin (1986), who believed that all thought is not necessarily arbitrary. In trying to ground my theory of the subject, that is, by locating it within a tiny primary school, I seek to relocate theory in the world of the everyday. As I explained in Chapter 3, this has been my ethnographic and deconstructive task. My thesis is in these ways an attempt to provide appropriate poststructuralist theories of subjectivity.

What I have tried to do represents a shift in cultural theory to include the theorization of a discursively constructed unconscious. This may explain why lived or rational experience cannot explain self-identity. The Ruralsville girls' writing indicates that subjects are continually displaced/replaced, as the writers come across new discourses and possibilities for them to be themselves. This results not in some kind of fractured, schizoid subject but in a writer's attempts at coherence. The ways that language writes the girls represents their sense-making from their worlds of contradictions, in much the same way as this thesis represents mine. Interrogating discourses by moving back and forth amongst them (Spivak, Johnson) orders one discourse to interrupt the other. Postmodernism is a seductive practice for someone who likes writing. But in allowing us 'to escape the patriarchal paradigms of Western thought' (Moi 1988:5) it privileges the verbal fluencies only available to a Euro-centric intellectual, and risks a narcissistic going-nowhere.

Accepted discourses of emancipation and enlightenment can seem to have depended on who wrote them (Foucault, Derrida, Lacan), and glorification becomes a risk also in feminist poststructuralist theory as we begin to establish our own 'greats' (Barrett, Grosz, De Lauretis). As a strategy of displacement, I have continually kept in play a process of stirring together theories and data and (auto)biography. I have done so to theorize girls, subjectivity and language; but maybe what is more useful is my recorded description (1989-1991) of what it was like being a girl aged four to twelve in a rural school. I am aware that as these girls grow older, and as this school must end its quite remarkable part in Australian rural history, the Chronology is a unique historic document. As the writer of the description (The Chronology) I tried to resist being a(n overt) theorist and instead imagined a reader who would look for easy entertainment through my re-telling of fact. And at conferences and seminars my theories are much more digestable coated with the sugar of easy-access writing on overheads (from Appendix A and B).

What is repressed in my re-tellings (Appendix B) relates to my resistance of theoretical discourses, as I have begun explaining in the last paragraph. It also relates to my irrational choices of two particulars. I shall say what I mean. In studying girls at a small primary school near to where I live, I had to deal with two factors I found difficult. The first was that I would really have preferred to research at a school where there was a woman teacher rather than a man teacher. The second was that I really didn't want to live in the country so far away from a big city. When I began to write the Chronology these factors were quite major for me, although now they no longer apply. The point of this is that my two (repressed) desires, to be urban and to work with women, led me to name both the man teacher and the school resistantly. 'Ruralsville' is a scornful contradiction of terms and 'Mr B' represents an acronym for a swear word. At the time I was hardly conscious that this was what I was doing, though I knew that my research journal writing engaged me in a subversive kind of laughter at academia. (Driving out to nowhere and scribbling whatever I like will get me the highest degree? What a wank!) At the same time I was terrified of not being clever enough to pass.

Taking myself as an example, then, I shall try to bring together some of what I have been saying, and to do what I have intimated: theorize resistance by considering repressions of desires. It seems to me that a culture of academic feminists allows me to write as I do, and thus to construct myself subjectively through the particular feminist poststructuralist discourses I have encountered, as one reader of other women's writing (Davies 1993, Flax 1990b, Middleton 1993, Soper 1990, Torgovnick 1990). This is not the place for a consideration of women's desires, based on my reading of those publications I have just cited in my last sentence; but it could be done. There are dangers in applying psyche-related analyses to other people's writing, as I hope I made clear in my discussions of such deconstructions (Chapter 3), and in my tentative analyses of the writing produced by the girls at Ruralsville (Chapter 4). However, I have left my own writing of this dissertation open for such possibilities. What I shall do now is explore the potential of taking theories of resistance to question the psychoanalytic. I shall do so firstly by introducing some additional references. This is an unorthodox practice at the end of a dissertation, but I hope it is justified by my need to present all of the fore-going before moving further.

I begin by picking up the language theories produced by Bakhtin (see Chapter 1). Here text was seen as social practice rather than as product, and expression is seen as related to complex experiences. As a non-psychoanalytic theorist, Bakhtin's work theorizes resistance as carnival (Bakhtin, in Gardiner, M. 1992:161-166). This is the point I take up now, and which Mitchell (1966:101-102) also points to. I find the following statement useful:

> *The carnival attitude possesses an indestructable vivacity and the mighty, life-giving power to transform.* (Bakhtin, 1973:88)

From Bakhtin's focus on carnival, and from the re-interpretation of carnival as resistance (Gardiner, M. 1992), I take my next starting point for understanding subjectivity to be located in the present, and based on experience in conjunction with 'free imagination' (Bakhtin 1973:89). My understanding of 'carnival' relates to girls' writing in the following ways. The Ruralsville girls share their cultural constructions of the metaphors and signs of their resistance (the shark, the L-plates, the lipstick, the magic carrot etc), and this represents their mutual knowledge. It also represents a girlish form of celebration, a kind of hilarity, a riotous over-the-top exaggeration. This is more than the revolt of those with subjugated knowledge, as a social resistance theory would assume. Being subjugated and being 'the subject' are in these ways different. Through the cultural medium of social interaction, the Ruralsville girls develop particular practices, or, as I have shown, writing.

> *This shared matrix of shared practices and symbols - a culture or tradition, if you like - forms an essential resource which is brought to bear in the appropriation and interpretation of external texts and discourses.* (Gardiner, M. 1992:163)

The school's discourses and texts, in this way, can be seen as distinct from, and as formative of, those the girls decide to actively engage with inter-textually, as writers. What Bakhtin does is show that texts can be re-constructed, or discursively re-ordered (1973, Bakhtin and Medvedev 1978), which is what I suggest the Ruralsville girls do when they write resistantly, against either the texts/discourses of feminism or of phallocentricism. For example, the stories written by Lucy and by Donna listing numbers of children or praising marital bliss (and boyfriends by analogy), can be read as resisting feminism. However, this is not a reading I have so far given amongst my analyses. In looking for resistances of phallocentricism I have overloaded my interpretations to bias a particular point of view. Discursively re-ordering them allows for a different theory. By this I mean that I can now link the writing discursively to an anti-feminism, which I have just done. Reading Lucy's and Donna's resistance (of feminism) as a riot or a joke or a carnival allows me to see it as a positive construct, not a negative result of oppression. (But theorizing like this has re-introduced dichotomized structures into my explanation.) Gardiner says the notion of carnival links to:

> *a characteristic cultural tradition ... which constitutes a kind of unconscious Jungian archetype 'behind the backs' of those involved ... a peculiar kind of deconstructive tradition which is enacted by the people.* (Gardiner, M. 1992:165)

If the girls' writing is seen as carnival, then what they do unconsciously is deconstruct whatever discourses they encounter. Hence Kylie writes as the 'good girl' and as the 'bad girl', acting on her repressed desires to be the other. In doing so, she creates her own carnivals of laughter at the discourses of the school and at the discourses represented by the happy family (before the teenage pregnancy of her sister). Margaret's writing against the competencies of a woman driver becomes a carnival of subversive signing for the other girls to share with her. Breaking away from the constraints I might place on her as an unwelcome researcher at her school is achieved by her naming of me as the driver. As an embodied cultural practice, writing allows for the taking over, by the girl group, of both the teacher's literacy agenda and my research agenda. Like a colourful and over-exuberant street pageant, these girls' writing proclaims its festive and plural defiance.

The 'folk-laughter' of the carnival is thus an opposition to the serious world it resists. Gardiner says 'it heals and regenerates' (1992:49) a culture 'driven underground'. Following Bakhtin, such laughter represents elements of freedom, the destruction of the (medieval) hierarchic picture and the disclosing of an entirely different world. The sad part about a carnival is that it happens so rarely. I wonder where these girls will find again the space they have had in shared writing as schoolgirls.

Theoretically following Bakhtin means again drawing on a literary theory of deconstruction, as I have begun to do with my post-scriptings based on the work of Spivak and Johnson. I have said that the Chronology can be read almost like a novel. Taken together with the Writings, it could read as a novel with multiplied descriptions of its protagonists and its scenarios. One of Bakhtin's major literary critiques is a deconstruction of the novels of Russian writer Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1973). Bakhtin says of a particular novel:

> *It is not a multitude of characters and fates within a unified objective world, illuminated by the author's unified consciousness, but precisely the plurality of equal consciousness and their worlds.* (Bakhtin, 1973:4)

Ambitiously, this is also what I have attempted to portray as a dissertational presentation of the Ruralsville research project. The key to the quotation from Bakhtin is that consciousnesses and worlds are 'equal'. As a poststructuralist I should have no problems with this, but as a feminist I want my own set of beliefs to triumph. This is a central problem for my feminist poststructuralist theory: the equal pull of resistances and repressions, the desire to eliminate the other. Even turning to Bakhtin could be a way to theoretically turn (powerless) 'repression' into (powerful) 'resistance', and thus avoid the implications of inevitability in girls'/women's psychic desires for the irrational. Worse, turning to Bakhtin can be read as a rejection of feminist theories and an acceptance of a Prince Charming.

Although Gardiner retains the dimension of the unconscious in his Bakhtin-based explanation of resistance, his reference point is Jung, who is not mine. A Lacanian-based theory of language as the symbolic order, exclusive to women/girls, makes more likely the possibility that the girls retreated into 'carnival' as a cultural semiotic. However, theorizing carnival not as repression but as resistance leaves open the possibility that girls' writings/semiotics function not as a retreats/repressions but as something else. If that something else is still seen in psychic terms, it seems that we could say it is a psychic resistance. This cuts across my earlier theorizing that feminist resistance theories are from sociology and regard social agency; and, conversely, that feminist psychoanalytic theories are (presumably) about repressed desires. What I am trying to establish is a theory of resistance that belongs to neither of these camps but straddles both. I suspect that reading fantasies and signs in writing as what I earlier called 'positives', rather than 'negatives', may be a way of psychoanalytically theorizing resistance. To bring this into poststructuralism would then mean disregarding the negative/positive dichotomy and accepting the contradictions.

This is line with Mitchell (1986), who says:

> *You cannot choose the imaginary, the semiotic, the carnival as an alternative to the symbolic* [order of language], *as an alternative to the law ... Politically speaking, it*

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> *is only the symbolic* [order of language], *a new symbolism, a new law, that can challenge the dominant law.* (Mitchell, 1986: 102)

I suggest that this is what is happening with the academic texts of some feminist poststructuralists. Mitchell says, 'It is not that the carnival cannot be disruptive of the law; but it disrupts only in terms of that law (1986,102). I would argue that carnival operates not only as disruption of 'the law' but as a cultural sign for girls/women. By doing so it links the pre-conscious with the consious so that the two are not separate, discrete states but ongoing life-forces.

Looking at the particular as Bakhtin does, and focussing on a theory of carnival, are ways to theorize girls' fantasies and metaphors not as repressions, but as resistances. Following Bakhtin allows us to include psychoanalytic explanations of semiotics/signs and to return to analyses based on the study of literature, re-interpreted as a study of life. As Bakhtin says:

> *Carnival itself ... is, of course, not a literary phenomenon ... its participants live in it ...People who are in life separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free, familiar contact on the carnival square.* (Bakhtin, 1973:100-101)

It does seem that the girls' writing at Ruralsville can be read in this way, and that the 'carnival square' for the girls is their jointly-constructed textual narrative (Appendix A). I am not so sure about the 'impenetrable ' barriers, but it does appear that much resistant writing, of various kinds, went on at the school. More and more, though, I am having to think about my dissertation as carnival. For example:

> *Carnival brings together, unites, weds and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the lowly, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid etc.*
> (Bakhtin 1979:101)

Bakhtin says that carnival became, in literature, a powerful means of artistically understanding life. If the laughing images of the Ruralsville girls' writing are seen as aspects of carnival, then another dimension is added: carnival is not created as a solo. In theorizing a culture of schoolgirls, then, the sharing of images, the feeling of going one further than the other girls, the laughing together and not in isolation, are important aspects. Alone, one girl (at home?) can not produce resistance. At school she writes in concert. (For feminist academics there may be geographical isolation but there is also the closeness of published print.)

There are various ways feminists can make use of Bakhtin's theories. Johnson (1993:133), for example, relates the body of the adolescent girl to a grotesque, carnivalesque openness that challenges the restrictions and limitations of an anticipated womanhood. In this way I could theorize Lucy's sprawling on the classroom floor forever picking up deliberately overturned pencil boxes; or Lucy and Chloe's defiant tomato picking and its resultant red-squashed mess on the shelter shed roof. But my thesis primarily theorizes writing, and so these bodily resistances become keys to what was inscribed.

As a way of testing my suspicions about links between carnival, the unconscious and collaborative writing, I looked to feminist film theory (Crisp 1990, 1991). Because I am partly telling the narrative of my own theoretical production now, I would argue that discussing Crisp's work in the earlier chapters of this dissertation was not appropriate. In Crisp's research I found methods of deconstructive reading I am familiar with, and, additionally, the theories of psychoanalysis I have begun to explore. It seems that Crisp believes the two can be combined, and that what I had seen as repressive can be happily re-worked as resistance. Translating Crisp's visuals of metaphor (a fridge, a camping trip, a gun) into the verbals of metaphor that I have researched (an L-plate, a magic carrot, a shark) was not too difficult. Similarly, I found the projections of an academic writer's subjectivity into her text an appropraite strategy. But most exciting was my discovery of a feminist film theorist's locating of the resistance/carnival intersection:

> *resistance is commonly understood in terms of the carnivalesque, a category of texts and textual use developed from that proposed by the Russian Marxist, Mikhail Bakhtin, on an analogy with the old tradition of carnival, an archaic people's festival characterized by the reversing and breaking of the rules of conduct and social heirarchies that governed the rest of the year, and by a celebration of the body, the excessive, the grotesque.* (Crisp, 1990:113)

In one way, of course, reading this (in 1993) was awful, because I thought I had found something unique. Seen differently, my experience supports a theory of counter-culture. My reading of Crisp's discussion allows me to re-work my feminist poststructuralist theory following Bakhtin, but with the reservations I have hinted at. It seems that, by a carnival/resistance, the girls offered each other a space for speaking. Psychoanalytically, this allowed them to endlessly break down and re-build their relationships to each other and to the world. Their deferrals of narrative resolutions and their de-centering of the events and practices that surrounded them, allowed them the space to engage with shared fantasies and shared desires. Laughing at repressed desires, by writing the desire, became a way to 'cope with the psychic dilemmas caused by their situation in patriarchy' (Crisp, 1990:115). Dealing with the 'real' anxieties of their own lives, such as motherhood or adventure, power or its lack, loss of friends, eventual sexuality, being positioned/propositioned by boys, etc. was possible because of particular inscribings of femininity. Dealing, 'in exaggerated and metaphoric forms', these girls were able to live in advance through some of the paradoxes they knew life would bring them.

This meant knowing not rationally, but psychically, that the other girl-writers understood their various positionings as something they had in common. Further, it let each girl know that as she became more literate she had more keys to her self, and to the selves of the other girls. Crisp (1990:116) shows 'how viewers work over in fantasy the material offered' by a television program. In researching 'psychic possibilities' Crisp considers 'what is too dangerous or too risky to be acted out in real life'. What is very different between the television viewers Crisp researched and the girls at Ruralsville is the social dimension: the girls who wrote did their considering and writing together.

Thus, for them, exploring 'many different and sometimes contradictory sets of femininites and feminine subject positions' was a socio-cultural act of sharing. My psychoanalytic readings of the research data and its semiotics (Chapter 4) have also shown their writing explorations to be psycho-cultural. As a licensed escape from the orders of the classroom, writing opened psychic possibilities not otherwise there. As 'only' narrative, writing also offered the safety of a regular dose of indulgence, without threatening the status quo. By writing themselves into their narratives these girls formed pleasured feminine bondings across language and discourses. The psychic forces at work in the lives of a small group of girls cannot be accurately located; seeing some of the ways the girls dealt with them may be.

By having written all of this, though, I have now moved away from theorizing resistance and into something else. In this I am led by Johnson (1993:32-3), who rejects notions of resistance and subversion, 'which continue to preoccupy studies of popular culture', and which she sees as remaining 'trapped within notions of the pre-social individual'. The main reason for her rejection of resistance theory is:

> *the way in which this approach to the issue of women and popular culture retains the dichotomies established by modernism and, in particular the dichotomy between the categories of personhood and woman.* (Johnson, 1993:32)

Here I must agree. The Ruralsville data shows that whether the girls are seen as resisting (or not) is not the crucial point for theory. As subjects, they have the status of persons regardless of how they self-define or how they choose. Deciding whether they are 'either crushed by or stand up to social forces' (Johnson 1993:32) is itself a value judgement imposed by the positioning of the judge. Transforming Otherness, by subversion of stereotyped gender discourses, into ideologically acceptable girlhood, is a concept arising from particular socio-historic formations. I suggest that those formations may come from the modernity that comprised the girlhood of the resistance theorists (and this includes mine). The socio-historic formations of Ruralsville girlhood, as I have fleetingly compared them with those of the same school last century and with my own, are different. The desires and the capacities of these postmodern schoolgirls determine their changing relationship to cultural ideals. Studying this, however, requires a whole new dissertation.

Femininity

For girls/women, writing can be an important site for their construction of selfhood. The practice of writing is a way of putting themselves into the picture they draw. Being feminine, however that is construed, is not only projected through the tangibility of a writing product, but discursively produced. The Ruralsville data and this dissertation show various femininities being constructed and supplanted. By writing themselves into their texts girls/women become other than their pre-writing selves.

What set out as a feminist enquiry became a kind of romp through poststructuralist possibilities. The signs I have been trying to read led not always in the directions I intended. It seems that I have said something of the nature of spoken and written language, of the possibilities in poststructuralist descriptions and interrogations and of contemporary social research. But about femininity there is much that I have not managed to say. I am not at all sure now that the Ruralsville girls even became gendered persons, only that they spoke as subjects of their writing.

My increasing admiration for Mr B as a teacher, and my sadness at his now impossible position as the teacher without a school (Appendix D: newspaper article), has shown me that the difference between us is less than I thought. Why did I not spend more time at the girls' houses? Was it easier for me to be the school visitor? Did I prefer to be a writer, and school was the place where I could be? These are questions I still cannot answer. (My) femininity is not just a set of meanings and significations. It is choices, actual knowledge, particular events, times and locations. Gender itself may be a fantasy I tell myself about, so that I know what to wear, how to talk. Perhaps being at the girl's houses meant the

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(feminine) 'me' must do and say in particular ways; and the distanced 'me' (who is feminine differently and who writes) was freed of such dilemmas. If gender is a fantasy, it depends not only on the externals of the social but on the interiors of the psyche, and on the indescribable interplay and confusions between.

A theory of inter-subjectivity and intra-subjectivity means defining oneself not only in relation to one's friends, but to one's past. I suggest that a femininity theory via language, which is a mode for discourse production, can be both social and psychic. Further, I suggest that identity is a matter of defining oneself 'against the other.' This allows for gender to be a performative dynamics combining the social with whatever happens/happened within the subject herself.

In this way, writing, for its writer, is more than appears to be written. Because writing is physically tangible, it remains for us to reconsider its meanings. Additionally, writing is not simply a vehicle that conveys something; it is the something itself, though not the original something. This raises the point that writing is an object, as spoken language never can be. For girls/women an object relationship appears to be important as a way of defining oneself as subject. Seeing that object as writing (but defining subject/object poststructurally) allows for constant shifts between the two. This may be why neither (writing's) meaning nor subjectivity can be fixed. Further, it seems to imply that femininity is not fixed either.

Writing allows for constructing contradictions which relate to what we choose not to do. In selecting from feminist and non-feminist discourses we both reproduce and resist the status quo. I suggest that taking up femininity is developed by being a writer. It seems that the writing of narrative fantasies allows for the location of the psychic, thus enabling girls/women to 'want differently'. The acceptance and rejection of particular discourses of femininty is apparent within the girls' writing. This seems to happen as desires are written through the adoption of metaphors and fantasies.

Although the research set out to consider discourses that are phallocentric or oppositional to them, it arrives at no satisfactory conclusion here. Maybe by its own discursive effects the dissertation has produced something useful, but play with deferred meanings has meant that its values can only be transient and implied. Fashioning femininity seems to be an outcome of writing production, but what feminity is can not be dealt with.

The thesis seems to say more about poststructuralist theories than about feminism. It shows that femininity is not split, as a binary would imply, but multiplying and changing.

It becomes so by interaction with others who are variously feminine, and with the considerations that come through the production of writing. In this way femininity is culturally constructed, with literate subjects further inscribing themselves. Femininity is considered not against masculinity, but simply as what girls do/are. Unconscious structures appear not to be fixed, and this applies also to femininity, and presumably to masculinity as well.

The aspects of girlhood I observed (writing about each other, playing together, forming and dissolving duos, emphasizing the body, writing secretly at home, being bonded to their mothers, etc) are in this way aspects of a culture producing subjectivities. I would argue that these are not necessarily observations of the feminine, but that they are possibilities open to the boys also. That the boys are not picking up the discourses that construct these particular subjectivities may be measured by what is omitted from their writing. If the history of girlhood allows for the girls to write what they do, how can the history of boyhood be changed? Perhaps an answer lies in the writing of the psyche.

The research data is a series of inscriptions of the effects of femininities. The presence of 'the subject' in writing and elsewhere, is an impossibility. But the feminine seems to be there. It operates psychically through chains of associations, as a series of repressions of wished-for fantasies. It also operates discursively, as a series of contradictory practices. Femininity appears to be a combined matter of psychic relations and active processes of negotiating the present and the past. Being conscious of these relations and negotiations may come about by writing or by reading. Defined with binary gender norms women and girls are feminine. Without that binary we are only subjects, and gender is a cultural fantasy.

The thesis gives primacy to the production of written language as a constitution of the subject. By writing, the subject takes herself as the object of her gaze. In this way the productions of writing function as mirrors to the self. Girls are seen to be the subjects of their own self-knowledge, though there are different forms of subjectivity. The research shows that the resistance of undesired power operates not only through the body but through the acts of writing. Here certain subjectivities are refused and others are taken up. The self is not autonomous only, but determined by multiple events and factors. This self is always engaged in practice and hence never passive.

The deconstructive analyses of the thesis go beyond material processes of lived subjectivity. By questioning the realms of psychic processes they attempt to provide accounts of inner subjectivity. To do this, the psyche is made the object of the psychoanalyses. What is remembered and what is unconscious is crucial to the production of feminine subjectivity, as is shown by deconstructions of the girls' writing and fragments from the researcher's life narrative.

Reflections

The thesis is as much about doing research within poststructuralist theory as it is about substantive enquiry. Its shifts between the feminist and the poststructuralist are problematic if consistency is necessary; although sometimes its feminisms and its poststructuralisms blur.

The act of reading is a central part of doing research. The thesis de-naturalizes theorizing and collecting data. It does so by explicit and metaphoric considerations of the functions of academic discourses. Substantively, the thesis uses its material to suggest new lines of theory and research for feminism. These include the significance of the beginning-to-write-stage; and carnivalesque resistance as an appropriate metaphor/strategy.

By presenting a range of data the thesis suggests different ways of looking at girls, subjectivity and language. As the research progressed, the founding category of gender developed into explorations of semiotics, poststructuralist thought, psychoanalytics and cultural theories. In this way a feminist positioning led to discursive change. Attempts to write within the domains of *écriture feminine* (outside the symbolic order) may isolate this research from masculine scrutiny. Its writer hopes that this is not so.

The thesis suggests a theory of subjective collectivity. Further, it suggests that there may be some continuities over time, as subjects shift to relocate themselves. In poststructuralist theory, subjectivity encompasses being both the subject and the object. This philosophical positioning displaces traditional opposites. Identity is seen to be a fantasy arising from the imagined split between the subject and the object.

How we see what has happened carries retrospective significance. The production of story writing allows us to scrutinize our selves. At Ruralsville the openness of stories helped to constitute a girlish culture. It is likely that transformations of femininity come about through re-telling of stories. Reconsidering life-events, or re-writing origins, enables new and intertextual readings. Through writing, what has been repressed may return. The unconscious, with its potential for both entry into and subversion of culture, is simultaneously absent and present. Because of this, the unconscious makes identity impossible: its repressions undo identity.

A feminist poststructuralist position of multiplication is not about numbers of qualities, but about the processes and effects of multiplying. When subjectivity is touched, writing allows for these qualitative processes and effects. If there are no distinct boundaries between self and other there is no desire to quantify, as quantities indicate separations, fixedness, continence.

Writing is the tool and the object of the research, but the data and its analyses are entangled with memories. Writing is more than the representation of experiences: it can be an agent of change. This involves inter- and intra-subjective processes of imagining, negotiating and challenging. Becoming a writer happens not only between the ages of four and twelve. We make multiple beginnings. (And publications and numbers of readers are quite remote from other production effects). The effects of carnivalesque resistance, for the feminine subject who writes, are transformation. Such writing is not only a product but a social practice related to complexity.

Discursively re-ordering so that events become differently shaded and lit is a feature of carnival. When this happens in narrative, by the agency of a writer, the world is seen differently. This becomes a deconstruction of whatever discourses previously appeared central. Signing to readers, by writing the carnival, is in this way a subtle and cultural practice.

EPILOGUE

(11.1.94, 2.45pm)

I answer the phone in my office. A friend is calling me from her studio. She works in the main street of the town five minutes by car from where I have done my research. She used to be a primary school teacher before she became an artist. Together we have laughed and cried over deaths, divorces and disasters.

Friend: I just thought you'd like to know. The Ruralsville school's just gone by. The whole town came out of its shops and stood on the footpath to watch. Yes, very slowly, on the back of a truck. Took up the whole road. Off to its new resting-place as a portable classroom. I think it's illegal. There's no police escort. Yes, they should have chopped it in half. But it's much cheaper to shift it in one piece if you can get away with it.

I go and get a cup of coffee, imagining the violation of the newly exposed ground. For five years I have written to disrupt oppositions between theories and narratives. In one afternoon a truck shifts a school from sight/site. Carnival and archaeology combined. Femininity at this moment is a shared and tangible knowledge of mobility: a non-resistance of change. Writing is its record, and subjectivity a re-location between. The binary split? Bypassed by the Ministry of Education. Cultural sign? The school as self. The fantasy and the real? Sometimes there is no dividing line.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: The Writings

The following is some of the writing written by the girls. Omitted from this collection is writing either included in the Interlude or not highly relevant to the research questions. The original spelling and some of the original formats with upper/lower case letters and underlinings are maintained. Headings and dates have been made uniform. ** indicates problems in reading the writing. Wherever possible what is presented here is the girl's first draft.

The girl writers in order of age are Kylie, Natasha, Jane, Donna, Lucy, Chloe, Margaret and Eve. Some boys' writing is included here from Aaron, Brett, Grant, Troy, Justin, Luke and David. All names are pseudonyms except mine.

1. Kylie's Writing

(1989, aged four and five)

DONKEY (7.3.89)

I am a donkey. I go bee haw. I like running and eat grass.

ONE DAY TIM WAS ASLEEP (14.3.89)

One day Tim was a sleep.(teacher's scribing for Kylie)

I LIKE SCHOOL (copying teacher's scribing)

I Like school.I like my home.

I AM GETTING CAR SICK (11.7.89) (attempted writing followed by copying of teacher's scribing)

Im eeyuyy co acwy ccooy cooyqq ooo ggos too cloy.

I am getting car sick because dad drives too fast.

(17.10.89)

Jeanette (copying of my name)

gRAEHAM

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broun

KyLie GraYTrOy JakSon JanE BrowN

I GOT A A FOR HURDLES

I got an A for hurdles.
I got a B for sprint.
For high jump I got C. fast.
(teacher's scribing)

WE HAVE COWS (31.10.89)

we have cows they are wild.
I like sport
Sport is Fun.

I AM GOING TO A BIRTHDAY PARTY

I am going to a birthday party Im going to wear a flower dress to the party.

THE NIGHT I HELPED SANTA

On Christmas night. Santa came and I wok up. I gave Santa a present. he opened it strate away. It was a new belt. He Loved it. then I helped fix his sleigh. then he Left.
The End

(1990, aged five and six)

(6.2.90)
Tuesday. I like to go shopping with my mum.

I HAVE A HORSE

Horses are fun to ride.
I like them. Buck is the name of it

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(19.3.90)

Monday. On the weekend I played with Flash.
the Wood MuM or you Will get cold.

Friday 7th September
I like to do very very hard sums.

Monday 10th September
I brought my petite ponies.

Thursday 13th September
I have one very small filling.
hwtsewhite

Tuesday 16th October
nexty Im Next year I'm going to have a desk.

(1991, aged six and seven)

THE LION GETS AWAY

One night a wild Lion called Tim got out of his cage and teffied (terrified) the pepool (people). Justina went to catch Tim in the morning, because Tim and Justina where (were) good friends.

THE WILD WOOLLEY CHILD (30.4.91)

1.the wild woolly child chased lions up ladders
2.she had to go to the barber shop One day
3.a lady had a chainsaw to cut her hair. The chainsaw broke
4.then she went home
5.she brushed her hair
6.she chased the barber.
THE END

THE BEST THING (14.5.91)

The best thing that happened at Wallawong was going home.

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MY OWNER LEFT ME (28.5.91)

My owner left me because she hated me. She sold me and took Jill for the money and rode off. She left me with a very nice owner. Then she cared for me. She didn't whip me. It was a sunny day and there was a circus that day two km away from my home. I found my owner and galloiped to the circus. I was late for my prefuomuorse this horse named Jill was pracing for me. I was angrey.

THE CIRCUS (9.9.91)

One day justina had to live with her cousin Troy. They were very good friends and Troy even owned a circus. When Troy whistled a diffrent tune a horse did a diffrent kind of dance. I rode a horse and it danced for me.

WE HAVE TWO CHINESE MEN

We have two Chinese Men
the Chinese men had to sleep in Greg's bedroom.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

Little Red Riding Hood was A little girl.
She went to visit her Grandmother.
On the way she met a wolf.
The wolf tried to trick Little Red Riding Hood.

MUM SAID TO PACK MY BAGS (4.6.91)

Mum said to pack my bags she told me what to put in my bags I will tell you what I put in my bags. A good T-Shirt. My jimboots.
My Toys.

2. Natasha's Writing

(1989, aged six)

(7.3.89)

I like to be a hairdresser. and I like to ba* and I like to kut pepls and pat. and curl th her.wave ver her.and prm ver her.

(21.3.89)

I am a rat and I smell. I am a nuisance. I live in and hole. et cheese and I am. pretty good.

(30.5.89)

The day I got a car.

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I said to Mum I want a car and she said wat to yor seventeen and I said I am seventeen

3. Jane's Writing

(1989, aged seven and eight)

(30.5.89)

my frienD plays with me and her name is emma I Like her she is my bess frienD I play with her all the time and I have got maer frienDs but emma is my bess frienD and I play with sam and I play with emma and I have tow frienD and I Like sam and emma

(2.8.89)

Wednesday. Today I played Momopoly and with the rollerskates. Tomorrow we are going to the philippines.

Monday 10th September

Today I have come back to school. On my holiday where was an earth quake. It was 7.7 and the house we where staying in split in two.

THE DAY THE SCHOOL BURNT DOWN

On Monday I went to School. It was play time Mr B was macking some Coffee. There was a burning smell The School was on fire. We all ran out. Mr B put the the hose on and squirted the School

(1990, aged eight and nine)

Thursday 15th February

Yesterday me Chloe Donna Lucy and Aaron delivered letters.

It is Tuesday February 20th

m n p h

many hands make light work explain

Today our School received a new Victorian flag from Mr Roger Hallam.

(1991, aged nine and ten)

US

Today I'm packing my stuff to go to the PHILIPPINES with Lucy, Chloe and Donna.

The next day we went to the Airport When we got there we had a crash landing BUT... everyone was okay.

We got a taxi to the Dutch Inn. The next day we went to the beach and Donna got drowned in money.

We got all the money and she was dead. So we went to Hong Kong and went to Water World. We also went swimming all day. We stayed in Hong Kong for some weeks, then we went to Thailand and Malaysia

Chloe Lucy and I went all around the world until we were famas and Multi-Millionaires.

THE END

Tuesday 1st May

Yesterday mum got me some new shoes and some new pants.

YESTERDAY AFTER SCHOOL

Yesterday after School I went to the park some of my friend's were there. We played football. I Kicked the ball out on the road. Maria ran after it and was nearly hit by a car. She should have made sure there was on traffic before she stepped from the Kerb.

ROTTON APPLES ON TOAST

"Oh no not again" said Melissa as she banged her hand on the table. Her brother was making tea.

"Not Tom making tea again" He put the plates on the table.

"Whats this" said Mum turning her head the other way.

"Its toast" said Tom

"MORE LIKE ROTTON APPLES ON TOAST" said Mum and Melissa at the same time. Tom sat down and started to eat "mmmmmmm" he said. "Yuk said Melissa and Mum. Mum made some dim sims and Melissa and Mum ate them. "mmmmm" they said

"Yuk" said Tom "I'm a better cook" he said as he put two more bits of bread in the toaster. He got more rotten apples out of the bin and put them on the toast. Then their Dad come home from work

"Whats for tea" he said "ah dim sims" he said when he saw the dim sims

"Tom's cooking toast for you Dad" said Melissa.

"Yea" said Tom and gave Dad one of the pieces of toast.

The next day Tom got up early and went to the garden. Melissa looked at him out the window. Tom was digging up worms. Oh he's going fishing Melissa thought. He got a worm and put it in his mouth then smiled. He put about 100 worms in a jar and ran in to the house. He put two pices of bread in the toaster. When it was cooked he put the worms on the toast then ate it. Then Melissa got up and Dad and Mum got up. They sat at the table. In one half second Tom put three plates on the table.

"Whats this" said Melissa

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"Toast" he said

"MORE LIKE WORMS ON TOAST" Melissa and Mum said. Tom started to eat "mmmmmmmm" he said

"Yuk" they said. Tom packed his lunch box with worms, Melissa packed a honey sandwich, an apple and chips. Then Tom and Melissa went to school. Mum went shopping and Dad went to work. Mum came home at 3.00. Tom and Melissa came home at 3.30 and Dad came home at 5.30. For tea they had roast chicken but Tom had worms. The next day Tom did'nt get out of bed. Melissa went into his room

"Whats wrong?" she said.

"I feel sick" he said

"I'll tell mum" Melissa said. Mum came in.

THE DAY I TURNED 21

Tomorrow I turn 21 and I am having a big party and lots of people are coming. Now it is my birthday the party starts at 5 oclock it is 12 oclock now so I will go and have lunch at Mac Donalds. I came home at 3 oclock and got redey for the party I brought all the food on Friday so I had it all redy. It is 4 oclock now. People are starting to come now. Oh here comes Donna she is 22. Donna brought some popcorn. Then Lucy came then Erin and Jessy and everyone was here. Erin and Jessy gave me a horse and Donna gave me a car and Chloe and Lucy gave me a horse too. After a while we had the food then we had the sweets we all liked it because I made it. We went to Donnas house and had the party there. When it was 2 ocock pm we all went home. The next day it was Erins birthday she is turning 20 and she is having her birthday at the Pub it starts now so I better go.In the morning we went to Hong Kong. We stayed with some nice people for a year. Then we went to Thailand for 2 years Then we started to travel around the world and became famous. People gave us money all the time. We were rich. I nearly drowned in money. We had so much money that we had nearly all the money in the world. We gave some money to the poor people so that they could live. But they gave it back and the bank gave us money. I am the best in the world because everyone said so. So did I. Then we went home. I AM THE BEST I went home and I was on a movie called JANE THE BEST IN THE WORLD!!!!!!! I got a lot of money for it. Then I was the most famous person in the world. So I went to Mars and met some martians and I took them to Earth. They were famous too. Then one day, when I was driving my limo, I crashed. THE END

MAGIC BOOTS

Brett got out of bed "I'm going for a walk mum" he said and off he went. Brett went to Anthonys house "I'll give ya a race on Saturday" said Brett "okay" Anthony said.Brett went home and worked all night making magic boots by Friday thay were finished. Brett was going to wear the magic boots in the race he was going to cheat with the magic boots. The next day Brett went to Anthonys house "Ready" he said yes Iv been practicing all week. Brett went to the park they had invited some friends to come and watch them. The Judge said "redy, set GO" he yelled Anthony ran as fast as he could and Brett just walked because he

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had the magic boots on but they wernt working. Brett slarted to run but Anthony had won already. Just go s to shows cheats never win.

RURALSVILLE CUP (1991)

I rode the winner I started off coming last and then I won.

I trainer the winner then the horse reared up on me and I fell over and I was on T.V. and in the new papers.

When my Jockey rode in the cup he won and I was on T.V.

SUPER DONNA (1991)

I am going on a holiday to the Mountains.

One day I was walking aroand. I fell off a clif Suddenly Donna caught me. It was Super Donna. Then she dropped me in the roof of the Hospital and I fell in a bed.

Then she wasnt there any more. So Then I went back home. The next day I went to Lucy's house and told her about Super Donna. She didnt believe me so I went to Chloe's house. She didnt beleve it either.

Kylie said I wish I could fly. Then I went home and Erin and Jess went home.

I told them and they didnt believe me either I lold every one and they didnt believe One day I saw Super Donna. She looked girl. Then she taught me how to fly.

4. Donna's Writing

(1989, aged seven and eight)

THE DAY I MET A WITCH

The day I met a witch. She took me on her broom and it was fun. but Chloe saw me and she told mum so I got a smack. Dad said, "Jenny, why are you smacking Donna?" because Chloe saw Donna with a witch on her a broom. So dad joined in smacking too and I cry and cry. I did not stop crying and Margaret said "Donna is a sook." It was Margaret's turn to get a smack but she reckons she is smart so she did not cry at all. dad's Wrinkly old hand hurts a lot and you can't sit Down for a year or so. Dat and mum stopped because Chloe came and Knocked on the door. I ran to the door and dad, mum and Margaret ran to the window. When Chloe was not looking I was still crying at the moment. Mum, dad and Margaret said "shut up". But I didn't stop at all. Margaret told Eve, Lucy, Kylie and Troy and I had no frends at all. EXCept Chloe. I didn't go on a witches Broom again.

THE DAY I GOT A BIRD

The day I got a bird It's name was Lucy i fedit seds but she was not wild a all because I terter her to stay ney me because I Loved her but She died the next day i was very very sad for a week so I did not go to school for a week and She was so Cutty I Love her so much I made a grove for Lucy it had her name on it i cryed and cryed i did not stop at all so mum buyet me one and it did not died so I got a nuther bird and it did not died ether so i had fun with Chloe and Lucy and i played with them every day and I love them too. then I got a cooatoo and it was yellow and it was so cutey I let it came for a ride with me to Carly's and we had fun because went on the slide it was very very fun especially with Carly because Carly has a cooatoo and it's name was Jason and it died of a pneumonia because Mick sot it But Carly did not no at all.

The End. funny.

AFTER SCHOOL

Yesterday after school I went to the park. Some of my friend when there we played bootball. I kicked the ball out on to the road. Anthony ran after it and was nill hit by a car. He sood have made sord they was no traffic before he steeped from the kert.

MY NEW TRAC SUIT

The other day my mother bougth a pattern and some warm green materiel. She planned to make me a tracksuit. I helped h[illegible] to pin in up the pattern. Then we cut it out. Mum used her sewing machine stitch it up. The tracksuit fitt good. Because it was cold the next day I wore it to school.

(1990, aged eight and nine)

THE GHOST HOUSE

One day me and Jane went for a walk and we came to a very old house. Jane said there is some trueser in the house I know there is but there is a ghost gauding it. Jane pulled me along into the old house. I opened the front door Jane went in first we went into the bed room. first Jane know it was the bedroom because there was a comb lyeing on the floor and some roller that you put in your hair and two beds then we went back into the hall I had a nice bath there was lot's of hot water so Jane jumped in to. We got out the a ghost came in and we jumped out of the window I woke up it was only a dream.

A FARMER AND SONS

An old farmer feels felt that he has had not long to live. he call called his sons to speak to them for the last time. He tolled the young men that a hidden treasure lies lay in one of the field where there are we_

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Brisbane. We went on the merry-go-round and a boy fell off it. It was Chloe's friend The Ambulance came to get him and Chloe went with him in the Ambulance but him didnt die at all.

5. Lucy's Writing

(1989, aged seven and eight)

PLAYING GAMES (1989)

Today I went to Donnas house and we played chooks with Ben. We just finished playing when I saw a martian It came to me. It said "what were yo playing".

I said "chooks".

He said we don't play chooks. We go to places like the big swamp pool, and play a game against the tennis tail monster or we go to the Big Snowball and play snowballs fights.

I said to Donna "Let's go to Eve's house"

SLEEPOVER

One night I slept over at Chloe's house. We watched videos and played games. We had pineapple and ham pizza. I had three pieces. Chloe had five. Kylie had one. After that Chloe and I had a shower together. Chloe slipped on the soap in the shower. After we had a shower we went outside with Kylie and Dean. We play tigg Brett and Aaron came to play Castle. It was fun. After we played that we had to go to bed. When everyone was asleep we tiptoe up to the kitchen and got a cup and filled it up with Fruit Loops and ate them in bed. We woke up in the morning got dressed and went to Murnalong and went shopping. We had hot dogs for lunch. Then we went to the movies. We watched "All dogs go to Heven."

I AM A TEXTA

Hi my name is Bluey. I am a crayola texta. I am one of the thick ones. My colour is blue. This is my story. One day a girl called Joe picked me up. She pressed hard on my tip. My tip went down a lot. Then came another person. He drew over black with my tip. The tip went black. Mr B yelled at him. Then he did something really bad to me. He cut half of me off. I cried a lot, then I got used a lot. Then I got put in the bin. It was like a slide going in the bin. It was hometime at school. They did their jobs. Some girls emptied the bin into this big green bin. Then on Tuesday they put me in the garbage truck. I met some texta's there. There were real cool so the man in the garbage truck dumped us in the tip.

RANDY THE RAT

On the night of the burglary I did'nt care because I was stealing food out of the fridge. Then I heard barking. I looked out. It was that stupid dog called Justin. He was running around the room with a slipper on his head.

How weird??

THE WORM

Once a upon a time they was an ugly worm. It's name was Jane. Jane lived in a person's garden and she was mean. She always hurt worms feelings. She goes to school and take's pens, rubbers, rulers and coloured papers which is exspensive. Her teacher did'nt know, so Jane did'nt get into trouble. She went to a Group Day and got into trouble and had to sit in Mr Arnotts car. Jane busted and Donna came out. "She was beautiful" They said "Thank you" said the worms. Then they found out that she was like Jane.

HAZEL THE BEA

One day Hazel got caught a spider. She was locked up in a cage. The spider tried to get Hazel out. She did Hazel bit him. She quickely flew out of the window for hours and hours. Then she came to a mouse's home. She said "You can live with me because I am lonely." The End

WHEN I WENT FOR A DIP

Today I went to the beach. I went up I saw a outopus. It look like She liked me. She took me to a rock where a mermaid sat. The octopus said her name was Donna. Then all of a sudden the octopus swaim as fast as she could. A net fall down. The octopus bit the net then swam away. I liked her. We went into a cave. We went down and down, then I saw a light. it was jewellery and gold. The octopus droped me and I swam with the octopus. We passed the jewellery and gold to the octopus house. It was nice. We went out of the cave and went back to Donna. She gave me a pice of cake. Then I met another friend. It was a jellyfish. It's name was Chloe. It was fun with Kate the octopus. At Easter time, I got a big rabbit from Kate. From Donna I got a shark and I got a egg with five lolly's on it. One day I went for a hoilday with Kate. We went to Antartica. I made a new friend. His name was Scot. I went swimming with Scot at Christmas. I got a mini bike that goes under water. Then we went bak to the cave, we went to the Sunday market. I went to a stall where Pual Jenning book's were. I said where did you get all those books. he said on the rock's. Then I went for a swim by my self. I swam up. I saw the beach. I got out of the water. I went home and Mum said where have you been?" I have been looking for you" I said when dad and me went to the beach. I went under the water, an octopus took me to a cave where she lived. Then she took me for hoilday. Mum said "where to? to Antartica. and her name was Kate. I said to mum, Today I am going to say goodbye to Kate. I went to Kate's home, she was in bed. I said goodbye to.

(1990, aged eight and nine)

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SECRET CASTLE

One day Chloe and me went to aked mum. if I could sleep over. Mum said yes. Chloe and I went to Chloe's house. We had tea. Chloe and I went to the bedroom. We packed fifteen touchers and ten packer's of markers and ten candles we went out the fount door we saw a shaning thing Chloe and I went closer it was a casle Chloe and I touch it. It felt funny. We went insiad it was dark we look of our backpacks we took out a packet of marker's and two candle's I gave one to Chloe we lit them we sarted to walk then I saw two ways Chloe went letf and I went right. I sarted to walk right it stared to get darker and darked. I tured a round and walked back Chloe was wait in for me. Chloe said it is a dead end I said it got so dark I could hardle see. I took off my backpack and got out two touchers I gave one to Chloe we bluw out the candle. I put it back in the backpack we tured on the touchers we ran right we went in we saw two horse one was male one was female. The femile was gesed about to had a baby we took it to a vet. We named the baby star. We took they to Hall Gap that is where we live we took the baby horse to a nice place. We had a ride of the horse. Then we gave them some hay. Then I said less had Lunch up a tree "Yes said Chloe then we can go to the horse shop and get a brudle and a suddle and a horse kit. So we went to Milk bar and broght two pies I gave 1 to Chloe. We went to a tree and stared to climb it intill we got to the top. Then we stared to eat our pies. We got down and went to the hose shop and got the things we wanted. We went home and put on the things I stared to ride my hose I went out the gate I had a ride on the road it was fun. Chloe stared to cry becose she wanted I ride. Then I got off and Chloe got on she have a ride and we went to the car we went back to the seret Casle Chloe said "I want to go back" I said "Chloe is a chicken" then Chloe said "I am going if you are going" I said "I am going". We went in a green thing was come afber us Chloe semeed sad. I went closer it stared to cudle her and Chloe stared to cry agin I said don't cry CHLOE. All of us started to get out but Chloe disapere and in return Donna came were Chloe was Donna and me qickley ran out I said "Donna were did you come from Donna said "I came from" then Donna diserpered I qickely ran got on my hose but Chloe's hose was not there so I jumped on my hose and stared toways Queensland to see Kate that's my friend octopus I put on my bathers on then Chloe on the sand I dived in the and called Kate Kate Kate came I said "Hey" Kate said come qick there's a baby dohpie a her mother died and the Father said I could look after her and said come back with some milk so we got some milk and I got on Kate's back we went to the place there was the baby dohpie. Kate gave it some we went home and made a name for my horse's and the dohpie. We named the dohpie fizzy and named all the houses taffy toffe Chocolate. Then I swam to shoshe and I saw Chloe we got on houses and rode to NSW it was fun we made two friends. I bought the news paper there was some robbers we look for one to caght. We saw a picher of one that's the one that we made friends with then I rembered that he told me were he lives. We went to his house and he opened the door and said "What do you want" I said "can I use your phone" "sure he said I rang up the pocile and said "come to Galyer Ave Quick". A pocile came to the door and knocked on the door I said "that's for me" he said who is it. I said it's the pizza man I open the door the pocileman hands up. they handcuffed the man and gave me a qqqqqqqqqqqqq. I went on my house to South Australia. I went to Robinvale. Foria and Bob said you can come bunyip hunting with us "Ok if you want to." The next day we went to bunyip lake. I swam up. I saw the beach. I got out of the water. I went home a mum

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

said "where have you been?" I have been looking for you" I said "when dad and me went to the beach I went under the water, an ocerpus took me to a cave where she lived. then she took me for a holiday. Mum said "Where to?" I said to antac I've a she name was Kate". I said, to mum. Today I am going to say goodbye to Kate. I went to Kate's home. she was. in bed. I said goodbye to Kate. she gave me a box. I opened it. There was a ring in it. I took it home I showed it to mum. It had eight dimen in it with a butafly in the middle and I vitie her every senon day.

The nd.

THE CLOUD PERSON

One day Pete decided to go to bed because she was tried.

So she did. When she was asleep she had a dream.

Suddenly the bed flew off in the sky, up to the clouds.

Then the bed dropped her. Pete bounced and bounced.

Then a little man came. Pete thought he looked funny.

This is what he looked like.

For days Pete liked it there, but some days she began to miss her family. The cloud person gave Pete everything. One day Pete said to the cloud person

"Its is time for me to go home".

So the cloud person gave her a tyre.

When ever you need anything get the tyre and you will float up.

(1991, aged nine and ten)

BATMAN BUG (14.5.91)

One Day the robber Batman Bug had robbed another Buggy Bank. Bug Town was nearly bank rupt. Just then my Boss Big Face rang on my telebug. He said "Private Eye you've got a case of arresting Batman Bug. Just then two Police Bugs came in and said "Batman Bug is in the Buggy Bank and robbing it". I jumped in my private limo and sped off. In about 5 minutes I was there. All the police force was there. I pulled out my bug bullet and walked in the purple door. Inside it was smelling funny. Then I dropped to the floor - sleeping gas. Half an hour later I woke up. Batman Bug was gone and there was only 1 dollar left. Then the Bug Airport pilot rang and said "Batman Bug is going to fly away." I ran all the way to Bug Airport Batman Bug was going to fly away to Singabug. I jumped on the escalater and I saw Batman Bug. He took out his bug bullet and shot. I got my stinger and zap! I zapped him dead.

The nd.

APPLE

Hello my name is Hollie. I am an apple. I will tell you a story. Once a upon a time I was only a baby blossom. It was fun. Until a moth came along and ate me. So I had to grow again. I was the last baby blossom left, except for a baby blossom called Sleepy. All the other baby blossoms had turned into little apples. When Sleepy and I where little apples the others were ready to pick. Then a big fat monster came. Sleepy was scared. I said "don't worry". They are only people to pick us. But I was wrong. They picked all the other apples. A little girl said "Daddy, can I pick these two apples?". "NO" They are too small. Sleepy said "Why did'nt they pick us?" I said "Because we are too small. Sleepy cried until night time. At night we fell off the tree. In the morning a worm called Brett came and took Sleepy and me to his house. He did'nt eat us instead he kept us. We were good friends. We had fun together.

6. Chloe's Writing

(1989, aged eight and nine)

DEXTER (Feb. 1989)

Dexter is a love puppy. He is white with black ears and tail. He is blind. He has a very good sense of hearing, smell and touch. Dexter tell the night when to go to sleep Dexter is the biggest love puppy

MY FIRST DAY AT DOG TRAINING SCHOOL (1989)

I was the best dog at Training and I wun a metal and tropy and evey one was claping and I was backing and I was the happy s dog out off all and I was prald of all and when I went home I stuch my nose out and all the aver dog weer saed and the oner's wer saed too. The oner's of me wer prald and the oner's of me wer prald too Chloe oner's was the wier too and Chloe the dog was prald too and Chloe mate backing to her and Chloe null had puppy's because she had a boy dog

(1990, aged nine and ten)

13.2.90

Yesterday I went to Donnas. I scratched my ankle while climbing.

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ONE SLIMY NIGHT (1990)

One slimey night Matthew Monster woke up and climbed out of his snotty compost heap. He decided to get filthy and go for a ghostboard ride. He took Lucy Longbones too. While they were boarding they met Dangerous Donna. They said "Hi fish face" "Give us a kiss sweetie" said Donna. Lucy Longbones and Matthew Monster ran away and were never, seen again.

SHOPPING

On Thursday evening Mum asked me to go shopping at Chatswood, which is a suburb of Sydney. We parked our car and entered a huge department store. Mum spent an hour chosing a new dress She then took me to the toy display. "You have behaved well" she said "I'll allow you to buy anything that will cost no more than ten dollars

THE PERSON

One morning I was playing in the grain bin. I heard footsteps. I tried to get out to go to my mothers hole. It was too late. A girl put her hand into the bin. She chased me with her hand. She caught me. I wiggled free then I ran up her jumper sleeve and came out the bottom. I ran into the garden next door. The dog chased me. I ran up a tree, I was safe now.

29.5.90

On Sunday Jacinta and I rode the motorbike

We had to nag Dad to fix it.

2.6.90

I chucked up last night. My mum thinks I have a bruised muscle on my shoulder.

SPIKE

"How come your hair is so spikey? asked Mandy.

"You really want to know?" I asked.

"Of course I want to know" said Mandy.

"Well it happened when I was ten years old. I had a really crabby teacher called Mrs Growly. Mrs Growly was always blaming and punishing kids for things they didn't do. One day Mrs Growly found some glue on her chair. She came out the front of the class, she growled in her growly voice "WHO PUT THE GLUE ON MY CHAIR?". I was smiling because I always smile. Mrs. Growly said "Because you are smiling it must be you. This is your punishment." She made me do a handstand over a pot full of glue. I had to stay there all day. When I got down from my handstand my hair was stuck strait" "I don't believe you, tell me the truth" said Mandy "I'm only joking, its really natural"

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To Mr Man on the moon.

Whats it like on the moon? How do you get around. Why don't you come down to Ruralsville in a rocket and have a holiday. It is a nice here. There is grass and birds and animals and insects and cars and lots of other stuff. You would like it in Ruralsville a lot.

Yours faithfully

(1991, aged ten and eleven)

THE JUNK CAR

The teacher was talking about how cars worked. I lifted up my desk lid so I could talk to Fiona my best friend. I whispered as quite as I could Lets go down to the Junk yard and built our own" "What" said Fiona out loud. "Fiona was that you talking said Mr Blake in his sternest voice. "Yes Sir" Fiona mumbled. "Go stand by the door outside" Mr Blake said. Fiona went outside by the door. Mr Blake continued with the lesson Five minutes later I asked "Mr Blake can I please go to the toliet "you can't but you may next go to the toliet at Break" answered Mr Blake "Yes Sir" I replyed as I walked quickly for the door. I open the door a shut in fast behind me. "What are you doing here Cris. How'd ya **** out" said Fiona looking amazed "I said I needn't to go to the toliet." "You little sneak. by the way what were you talking about inside" "I was talking about making our own car from the junkyard" "That an excellent idea" I better get back into the room. Just as I walked inside the bell rang. Everyone got out of their desks and rushed for the door. I was nearly knocked over. I was left standing there. Mr Blake turned from chalkboard and spoke "You go tell Fiona she may go to break" "Yes Sir" I replied. I ran out the door ignoreing Mr Blake who was saying next time don't run out of the class. *** The tip wasn't that far away from the school so it only took about ten minutes to get there. When we got through the fence I said "** It didn't take long to find what we wanted. Fiona found a motor and a weird look remote control. I found this long metal have tube, four wheels and two old seats. We fitted A propellor on the engine and connected

HAUNTED HOUSE - Part 2

Donna screamed. Lucy and I Jumped with fright. The boys stayed calm. Brett said "It came from over there" Lets get out of here" said Donna. "OK" said Anthony

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THE WITCH

Part 2 of the Worm

Brett some how walked into a town. He found a witch who acted friendly. The witch whos name was Jane. Jane said "I will give you some new eyes if you marry me". Brett answered "Yes". Jane took him in her house. There infront of a big black pot she said misturly "Sky and Rie and Apple pie, give my husband to be new eyes" All the time when Jane was chanting Brett was blindfolded. Jane took the blind fold off. Brett chroused "Horay I can see" ten times. The marriage was on that day. They had ten kids there names were, Tom, Joe, Sam, Mick and Michial, and Michelle, Jane, Liby, April, and Summer.

PART 3 OF THE WORM

Donna and Anthony got divorced Donna got married to Brett. Anthony gave Donna too cats for wedding presents the girl cat had kittens 20. Brett and Donna had 10 more kids. There names were Anne, Andrew, Ned, Nelly, Tom, Tilly, Candy, Cen, Mandy and Mery.

7. Margaret's Writing

(1989, aged eleven and twelve)

CEMENT TOOTHPASTE

"Bed time"

"Oh Mum do I have to?"

"Yes you do Joe"

Joe went up to the bathroom. He saw a pink box with gold writing. It said "NEW CEMENT TOOTHPASTE"

Joe squirted some toothpaste on his brush and started to brush. As soon as he finshed brushing his teeth he tried to yell "MUM"

But his teeth where cemented together. Mum came up running stairs.

"What is something wrong?"

Joe managed to say

"Yes"

Then Mum said "think of it this way you will not have to go to the Dentist tomorrow"

Joe went to his bedroom and in a few minutes he was asleep. In the morning Joe got up and got ready for school. When Joe got to school he just sat in his desk and didn't say a word because he couldn't. After a long mornings work it was play. As soon as all the kid where out of her class Mrs Myers rang Joe's Mum.

"Hello is this Mrs Myers"

"It is Jill Groves from Murnalong State School"

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"Yes what would you like?"

"I would like you to take Joe to the Dentist. He can't say a word and his not learning"

"I'll pick him up now and go to the Dentist straight away

"Bye" "Bye"

Mrs Myers drove to the school and picked up Joe and they went straight to the Dentist. They waited there for half a hour. Then the Dentist yelled

"JOE MYERS"

Joe walked into the room and sat on the chair. The Dentist asked Mrs Myers what was wrong with Joe. Mrs Myers explained and watched the Dentist get the chainsaw. He started it up and sawed straight throught the middle of his teeth. In half a hour it was over. Joe was greatful that he could talk again but his Mother was not because he talked all the way home. Now Mrs Myers always checks the lables before she put them in her trolley.

BORED!!

"Mum what can I do?" "Why don't you play with Katie." "No" "Go on a adventure" "O.K." I went down the path and out the gate. Then I saw Ian. "Hey where are you going"? "To join the army" "Can I come too?" "Yes" So we both went to the army. I was a bit shorter than the other girls But than didn't stop me. Than I passed and got a gross green clothes. But didn't mind. We did an obstacle course. We jumped water, went through tyres and all that sort of stuff. It was morning tea time. They had scones jam & cream. Yuk, with a drink of coffee. Next we learnt how to use the guns. that was hard work. We were there for ages beause I couldn't get the hang of the guns. That took the rest of the morning up. For lunch we had green stuff. It was Yuk. After learning how to use the guns I got stuck with being a computer Manager. I said "I wanted to be in charge of the guns." But they said "No" Ididn't like that job so I quit and went home. Ian quit too because he got to be Manager of the guns and not of the computers. He was a wiz kid at computers. But we didn't get what we wanted so we went home. Mum said to us "where have you been?" I said "It is a long story." So I had tea and had a

MY HOLIDAY IN MARNANDA (7.10.89)

We left Ruralsville at 8.30 we got to Grantville at 10.30. We went to Nanny's and Poppy's and some of our cousins where there and Nanny had the flu. At 11.30 we got to Grandpa's and we had lunch there. After lunch we saw Grandpa Canarie. At 1.09 we left Grantville. And about 2 hours later we past Ron and Mary Cousins. Then we stoped and then they stopped Mum, Dad, Ron and Mary talked for a while and we found out they where going to Mildura. Then in a few more hours we were in Mildura and we went strait to the Golden River caravan park and we got there they had no more on site vans but we have booked and van for Sunday, Monday and Tuesday night. Then after we got back on the main road we started looking for a Motel to sleep the night in but we went up and down the same road a few times and we still could not find a Motel so we had to come out a bit to a place called Irymple. In a caravan park called Coachman

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caravan park And for tea we went to McDonalds and for tea I had a coke, french fries, fillet o'fish and a hot apple pie.

ALIENS

It was a cold day in Winter when a Alien rocket came to Ruralsville. The three colored Aliens asked me if I wanted to go with them. I said "NO". So they got mad and grabbed me and put me in the rocket. We flew for hours and hours and finally we landed. On the coloured planet. I walked around for awhile and I found out the planet was flat. I found that out from when I fell off the ege. I didn't die because a meleorite caught me and flew me home. When I got home I had wished I had stayed on the other planet bacause when I got home I got a smack from Dad for going away without telling them.

THE DAY I WENT FISHING

"Home so soon darling"

"Yes"

"How was the fishing trip?"

"Don't ask"

"What happened to make you so mad?

"Well first John fogot the worms so he made me get them. I got them baited my hook, and after an hour or two a fish was on the end of my line. I got it in the boat then John held it up and it dropped back in the water. I got mad with him and we started to fight. John pushed me into the water. I nearly drowned. He threw me a bucket so I could float. John went to get a lifegurd. It took an hour because I timed him on my watch. When he came back there was no lifegurad with him but then he used his brain a threw me a rope After 15 minutes of missing me he got me in the boat. Then he made me row home. Me! When I nearly drowned."

WHEN MY PARENTS GOT DIVORCED

It was 7:30 Friday night. My parents where yelling at each other as usual.Then I heard my Mother scream.I ran to see what had happened.When I got there my Father was standing there looking at my Mum who was holding her eye. When Mum took her hand away from her eye I saw that her eye was swollen. I got an ice pack for her eye. All weekend my Mother stayed in bed. She hardly ate a thing. One Monday when I went to see my Mum all her arms were skin and bones. I gave her a kiss and went to school. At school I could not concentrate on anything.I was glad when it reached 3:30. I ran all the way home.As soon as I got home I ran upstairs to my Mothers room, her eye had gone down a lot but now she had a black eye. I asked my Mum if she wanted anything. She asked for her book. I went to the cupboard to get it and I found that my Dad's clothes had gone. I asked my Mum where they were she said "Your Father's left and had decided to get divorced.I was so mad I could hit my Mother but I kept it to myself. I asked her where he went.She said "45 Bingo street".

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The next day when I got up I went to my Mum's room, she was crying. I calmed her down, then I ate my Corn Flakes and left.

At school all I could think about is my Mum I got a B in writing and that is usely my best subject. All lunch I sat near a clump of trees by myself. When school got out I to Bingo street. I walked for a while until I came to number 45 I walked up the path and rang on the door bell. Dad answered the door and as soon as he saw me he shut the door in my face. When I got home Mum was watching Wombat. I said "Hi" and went upstairs to do my homework. At 6:00 my Mum called me for tea. We had Fish & Chips. I hadn't had them for ages. I gobbled mine all up. Then I went to my bedroom to finish my homework. At 10:00 I finished my homework and went to bed. The next day was Show Day holiday.I went to the Show with my friend Donna. We had a great time and for a while I forgot about my troubles.

After we looked around the Show we went to Donna's house. We had the whole house to ourselves because Donna's Mum was away. When it was 4:30 I went home. Mum was watching SALE OF THE CENTURY when I arrived home, because I did all my homework the day before, I watched it with her. For tea Mum made chop suey. I didn't eat mine because I was not hungry, but Mum ate it all up anyway.After I had tea I watched a video and while I was watching the video the phone rang. It was my Father. He rang to say be was sorry he shut the door in my face and he asked me to come and visit him on Saturday. I aksed him to hold on for a minute, I asked Mum if I could go, she agreed.

When Saturday came I put on my best jeans and jumper. I rode my bike as fast as I could. When I got there I ran up the path and rang the door bell. My Dad was all dressed up. I had never seen him look so good. We went to the Steak House Inn. We had a lovely meal and when we got back to Dad's house I went home. When I got home I went straight to my room and looked out of the window. Then I had a shower and went to bed.

In the morning I was late for school and I had to explain to the Principal that I slept in. For last session we did sport and when we did high jump I fell over the bar 5 times. I was glad when it was home time. My Mum picked me up from school and on the way home she told me that the divorce came though this morning and it said that I get you. She told me that we are moving out of Australia and we are going overseas to New York. I was devastated that I would not be able to see my father so much, but she explained that it was for the best. So I accepted it. Mum and I packed to go to New York. When we were all packed I rang Donna to tell her I was leaving. She was sad but she accepted it. On Monday we left at 6:00 to go to the Melbourne airport. At 9:00 we left on the aeroplane and we flew for four hours and fifty minutes. When we got there we bought a house on the outskirts of New York. It was a nice house with blue rooms.

I started school on Tuesday. It was alright because Friday was the end of term and I could see Dad.

THE NIGHT I SAW SANTA

It was the 24th of December. It was hot and I couldn't get to sleep. I heard someone in the lounge room I crept down to see who it was. I opened the sliding door so quiet, no'one could hear and peeped around the corner. It was a bit dark so I couldn't see. I got a torch and put my hand over it so there would not be too much light. I shined it on this person. This person wore an all red suit and black boots and as I shined it up I saw who it was. It was Santa. He suddenly saw me looking at him. He started to laugh sofly. He said "Come here". So I walked over to him. I sat on his knee and I rubbed my face on his beard. It tickled. He got me and took me into my room, put me in bed and gave me a nice big kiss. He told me it was a special kiss and I would not wake up until the morning and then he clicked his fingers and I was asleep. In the morning Mum woke me up at 10.00am because I slept in. When I tried to tell Mum I saw Santa she laughed and told me to look at my presents. I sould have known no'one would believe me so next time I see Santa I won't tell anyone.

8. Eve's Writing

(1989, aged eleven and twelve)

THE FLY (21.2.89)

I saw it all everything I can't remember exactaly what happend me being a fly and all I've only got a little memory. but I was sitting on Jenny's bed when Jenny's best freind Jumped through the window and neally steped on me I rushed to the lampshade where I useally sit see I was born on the table Just down from it they were having a bar-b-cue and I was born on Jenny's chop. anyway Jenny's best freind Jeniva and Jenny's enemy got though the window and were heading for her Jewl box. They ripped the lock open and took out Jenny's ring that her grandmother gave Jenny Just befor she died and they rushed out the window about 1/2 an hour later Jenny came in and saw the Jewl box and burst into tears poor Jenny what could I do I looked around I saw a tinkel there it was the ring It must of fallen out of Jeniva's pocket how could I get her to knotes I whisled all of a suden a swam of flies rushed through the window and came over to me we flyed over to the ring about 50 flyes lifed it on to the other 50 and we carried or our back we fley along and droped it into the jewl box they all flew out the window exsept me I sat back on the lampshade.

The End

GRANDMA'S HOUSE (6.6.89)

Hi my name is Mandy Yesturday I had to go to my grandma's house. What a bore. It is so boring at her house. We'd been there for an hour then my grandpa turns up an hour late from the PUB. He sat down and asked me to get him a whisky. Then my grandma said to me would you like somthing to drink, yes said my grandpa suddleny he allways answer for people and then he said yes shell have some water. My grandma looked at me and said again, softly would you like somthing to drink no thankyou, I repeated politley. One hour passed I was so boared then my father drove in the drive even later than my granpa he'd

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been working in the garden. He came in and said hello. You must be eastated said my grandma Have a drink said my grandpa. Once again my grandma said politley Would you like somthing to drink Yes He'll have a wiskey replied my grandpa roudley. ONCE again except my grandma looked a little anoyed but she tryed to hide it and repeated Would you like somthing to drink Yes please, could I have a beer. Certlanly replied my grandma. We were there for another Three hours before it was susgested we go home. Then it took another hour before my father stood up and said we'd better go and at last We went. We had spent FIVE HOURS there sitting at the kitchen table I missed all my television shows, that I uselly watched. Now I am sitting on my bed. What you have just been told is an entry in my diary. My grandparents now have retried way up north. My grandparents were really nice to me and I hardley see them much any moore because they live far far away. It was two years ago when I wrote that entry in my diary and I feell a lot different now, I miss the long table talks I also miss and love them.

SKYSCRAPER

Mum said we could go and see the new skyscraper being built it was realy as high as it was going to get Mum's was in the shower and I was waching T.V. mum rushed over to me and turned off the T.V. she said get some shoes on were going she ordered me I ran in my bedroom and swang open my wardrobe door and grabed some shoes I quickly put them on and mum was allready in the car beaping the horn I ran in the car and said Why are you allways in a hurry she didn't answer We didn't say anything till we got to the site mum and me walked soon we got a big shadow over us I looked up I said its moving no stuped mum said rember when we looked at MYRE (Myer) AND you thought it was moving but it was'nt I knew she was right. We were right in the middle of the big shadow what if it did fall. I looked up once more it was falling I ran and I ran it seamed ages to the end of the sight there it was I threw myself to the ground BASH I FELT my leg get crushed then blackout that's all I rember from the acedent. Next thing I saw was a doctor's face I looked at the rest of me I saw somthing awful I taped it it was a artificial leg and I wrote this after I got out of the hostipal ME AND THE LEG ARE DOING FINE.
THE END

Thursday 10th August
Last night I had pasta for tea. Next week I have to have a bloodtest.

Friday the 11th August
Last night my night was wreacked by maths I had to do.

9. Aaron's Writing

ONE DAY I LOOKED IN THE PAPER (31.10.89)

One day I looked in the paper and found a job. I went to ask my friends. I went to Matthew's first and he said "Yes". Then I went to Justin's. He said "Yes". hHen I want to Brett's and he said "No". So I waent to Brett W. He saud "Yes". I went to Grant's. He said "Yes. I went to Andrew's . He said "Yes." I said thats about all I need. We went to the Collumnsuim. Matthew played against Gfjds. he was doing the high jumping. matthew won by a centimetre. Grant played against Jnjf. bey were doing the long distance run. Grant won by a lot. Brett W played Sdag in weightlifting. He just won. Andrew played Fjthk in long jump. He lost by a centimetre. It was 3 to 1. We won but only by 2. The end.

THE FOOTBALL MATCH (12.3.91)

Today Dad had to go to footy. He played for Klinden and he was going to play against menang. he was going in a minute. We got to the club abd Dad went in. Mumsaid "good luck: and went home. I stayed to watch Dad. I went in the club rooms with him. The Menang club came out and a lot of people cheered. They ran around the field. Dads team came out ond more people cheered for them they ran around the field. the whistle blew. Every one got in their places. the basll bounced. It was tapped out by dad's team, but it went towards the other teams ens. this browm headed guy got the ball and ran towerds Dad's goal. he kicked it and Dad took a famous mark. He was right in front of the goals. He kicked it. It was a very powerful kick. It went through for a point. The score was Klinded 1.4.10 Menang was 2.3.15 Menang was winning by 5 points the ball bounced again. Dad tapped it out. It went to dad's goal's. dad's team got a free kick, because someone got tripped. They kicked the ball it was a goal. that meant the score was 7.5.41 menang 7.5.41 So it meant it was a draw. But there was one quarter to go. the ball was bounced/ It was tapped out. It was going to boun through the goals, but it was a point. so the score was 10.10.170 Menang 10.9.169 the siren went and it was a real close game. Klinden won by a point. The end

10. Brett's Writing

(16.5.89, note given to Donna)

Dear Donna,
I love you because I reckon you look good.
Do you like me.
from Brett.

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THE SCHOOL SPORTS (31.10.89)

Once upon a time Matthew said the school sports were tomorrow. So we trained and trained. Night went in the morning we went on an oval and the first event was the Shotput and I got a B Matthew got B Justin got A and Chloe got B the next event was the Soft ball throw I got B Justin got B Chloe got C and Matthew got A then it was Luch time then did long jump I got A Matthew gor an A Chloe got an A and Justin got a B the next avent was sprint I gor B Matthew got a B Chloe got an A Justin got a B

RUNNING AWAY (19.3.90)

Once Matthew and I ran away from home. We camped in Mildura. Just then godzilla crushed mildura but matthew and i got away and shot him with a conan. he was dead. We dug up a grave and shot him in because we could not push him in. The police gave us $5,000,000 each so we went to Russia. it was freezing cold.

LICENCE TO DRIVE (1991)

One day Tony and I went for our licence. We were burning around. I did a big skid and tipped it. Tony and I didn't get our licence, but we still drove around. We went to a party and we had a lot of soft drink and on the way home the cops stopped us. They gave us a breathalizer. They said "Your over .05" I said " We only had soft drink" In the morniong we drove to the beach. We decided to go to Tasmania on a first class tour. When we got to Tasmania we bought a ferrari and Tony got porshe and then we met Anthony. He was cool. He had a mercedes benz. It was cool to. We stayed at Hobart with Anthony. In the morning we decided to stay a week in Hobart. That day we took a dip in the pool. then we said we would take a tent out in the forest. Yony, Anthiony and I set off. When we got there we made a fire. i went and got the wood. it was a good fire. We stayed up and ate marshmelloews. At midnoght Anthony got tired and went to bed. But Tony and I were wide awake. We kept eating marshmellows. At six o'clock we fell asleep sitting on a log. In one minute Anthony jumped out of bed yelling "rise and shine" I said we just went to bed a minute ago." Anthony said "tough". I said "Well bad luck we are going back to sleep. Where is the toilet" Tim said. I said "there is none. Go behind a tree." When we went back into Hobart we went for our licence. We got it.

11. Grant's Writing

(16.5.89)
Eve
All of the other girls are fuckin moles
Me

12. Troy's Writing

THE MENANG SHOW (Oct 1991)

One day I went to the Menang Show and I saw a person leading horses around the show and i looked at the horses and I said "Oh." When I got there they gave me a ticket. I saw the dodgem cars and I went in the dodgem car. I crashed into Jamie McSwain and he crashed into me and I got out of the dodgem car and I went to the koala slide and I played on the koala slide

13. Justin's Writing

WHEN I GOT MY MOTOR BIKE (22.5.89)

I got a motir bike for my birthday. I jumped with joy. I said " I love it Mum. Can I ride my motor bike?" yes. I got my helmet. I arsk my mum can I ride it mum said yes but go strat to get your lisenceand then you can go to eny ones house so I did. I roadof on my moter bike. I went and got my lisence and went to my girl frends place and said do you like mny bran new motor bike I got it for my birthday on 20th April. And then I went to my friends place and it was his birthday on the 27th April. I saud it was my birthday on the 20th April. I sead what did you get for your birthday? He sead i got a bran new motor bike It is a dort (dirt) bike. I love it. Do you want to go to race and whel lets go to the race track. I am going to race you there. On your marx go and off we go I'll beat you there. Oh no you don't I won. My moror bike is faster than yours. the end. My girl friend is I love I love Ranay. The end.

THE ADVENTURE (30.5.89)

One day Matthew decied that he and I go on an adventure. He said to me, Yes we will go for and adventure." on the ** May. The time came we got packed and left to get our bikes. We road offon our bikes. I said " I miss my mum and dad. I want to go home. Look there I see a house. Do you want to go in to the house? No one's been home here for four years. They where 20 year's old I met a girl and fell in love and the same thing happened to Matthew. The end.

I AM A MOUSE (30.10.90)

I am a mouse. I live in a mouse hole. Every night I go and get a midnight snack. I have some blue vane cheese but there is a risk getting a midnight snack because there is a cat. Everyone knows cats and mice don't mix. One day i ran across the floor, Then I went in a corner behind the fridge. I got caught by a mouse trap. I was lucky because it got my tail It chopped a bit clean off. It hurt like hell. The cat named Anthony heard the trap gp off. Anthony came in a flash. I sprinted as fast as I could. I dived in to the hole. I just made it. I was puffing heavily. The cat slammed on the brakes. Anthony was lucky. Then I sayt down on my seat and watched TV. My favourite show was on it. It is doctor mouse it is my favourite show. As for Anthony the cat he had no supper that night and his mers said "that should teach you a lesson for not catchong the mouse."

ONE NIGHT (28.5.91)

One night there was a rattle in the roof it went on continuously all throw the night. It kept me awake all the night then there was a big RIP the next day I had a head ake. On the weekent matthew slept at my house and we went to go knock knocking and we went out the front door and we heard the noise on the roof and we treyed to make no noise and then a baby possum came up to us and then I picked it up and took inside. The mother picked up out sent and the mother possum came inside and hide in the corner.

14. Luke's Writing

WE WERE PLAYING CRICKET (19.3.90)

One day we were playing cricket and Anthony hit a six I saw a dead snak and I thought it was dead so I got a shovel and chopped its head off then i ran to the teacher and I said i chopped a head off a snake. I saw another one and it was alive so I got a shovel and chopped its head off. Then he hit another six

15. David's Writing

THE ROBOT (4.6.91)

Ounce a pon a teum terw lifd a boy how wonted a robot so he sat otuside wen dad got houm dad came out of the car he had a robot

(Once upon a time there lived a boy who wanted a robot. So he sat outside. When Dad got home Dad came out of the car. He had a robot.)

Appendix B: The Chronology

The following is the research journal compiled from notes I scribbled at the school and from transcripts at the school and elsewhere (Feb 1989 to Dec 1991). It does not include the bulk of the girls' and boys' actual writing, which is presented as Appendix A: Writings. The research journal is presented in the chronological order in which it was written, and is almost an almost unchanged copy of its original except that it is much shorter. I have cut parts either not especially relevant to this dissertation or included in the Interlude. All names, other than mine, are pseudonyms.

21.2.89

It is a hot day. Kylie wears a school dress. She is four. Chloe wears pink shorts, tiny plaits, plays at a computer at recess. Mr B tells the children about gravity and Isaac Newton.

7.3.89

Mr B: (talking to the younger children) Today I'm going to let you do what the big people do. You're going to write what you think about yourself. It could be something about your pets. It could be something about what you do at the weekend. Places you like to go, things you like to do. it might be something you'd like to be. It might be a person or even a machine. (to Natasha) Would you like to tell us what you're going to write about?

Natasha: Be a hairdresser.

Kylie: No. It's a secret.

Jane: I'm going to keep mine a secret. (Later, conceals what she writes with left hand and left arm as she writes)

Kylie: (concerned when texta gets on arm, tries to lick it off)

Natasha: (It's a hot day, but she's wearing long pink track-suit pants and an apricot windcheater) Donna, how do ya spell "people"?

Donna: I'm not tellin' ya.

Natasha: Mr B, look how much I done. (silence) Donna, stop lookin' at me. Sorry Donna, but I can't look at you now. (she places reader cover between them, standing it up.)

Me: (To boys. Later, outside, where it's hot) Do you know where

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Eve and Margaret are?

Luke: I think I know where Eve is. (runs away from his writing to warn her) Here comes Jeanette. (Calling out loudly. She ignores him. Later I go for a little walk to see if I can find Margaret. I don't. The boys are roaming around in a gang of four instead of writing. After I leave Eve and Lucy the gang of four goes up to them and interrupts their writing. I hear loud boys' voices. Mr B comes out and yells at them.)

Mr B: Hey, I suggest you boys split up if you can't concentrate together.) Two of the boys voluntarily run back into the school building. Eve and Lucy are still writing in the same positions on the ground. I notice five fully-grown gum-trees in a row, each with an old car tyre around its base. Must have been placed there when they were saplings. The only way to get them off now would be to cut the tyres.

Inside the school the younger children read their writing aloud.

Natasha: I like to be a hairdresser and I like to cut people's hair and plait. and I curl their hair. and perm their hair.

Kylie: I like to be a donkey cos I wanna say "hee-haw."

Later, I talk with Eve about writing at home.

Eve: I usually think about it for a long time first. I usually take ages. My writing at home is private.

Me: Do you write very often?

Eve: Oh, yeah. I usually write quite a lot.

Me: When do you do most of the writing?

Eve: I s'pose on the holidays I write any time, but mostly it's in the evenings.

14.3.89

The children are writing about the pictures in a Dick Bruna book. Aaron and Kylie have written "One day Tim was asleep..."

Me: Where did you get his name from?

Aaron: She made it up. (Points to Kylie)

Kylie: One kid at our house that's still born is called Tim, and one that's there's Tim-Tam.

Me: What's Tim-Tam?

Kylie: A cat. A born kitten.

Me: The Tim at your place isn't this Tim, is it? (points to picture.)

Kylie: No

Me: What sort of Tim is this Tim?

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Kylie: A boy. (The picture is non-gendered.)

Me: The Tim at your place. Is it a boy kitten or a girl kitten?

Kylie: Well if it's a boy kitten it's going to be Tim and if it's a girl kitten it's going to be Donna.

Me: (later, talking with Eve, Margaret and Lucy) Why'd you decide not to have "Narelle"? (they're naming the protagonist in their story.)

Eve: Because Mr B said not to have anyone in the room.

Me: Oh. Why'd you decide not to have "Robert"? (both names have been crossed out.)

Eve: Because Mr B said we'd have to act it out. (they didn't want to act out the part of a boy.)

Me: How come you had Robert? Isn't he in this room?

Eve: Oh, he isn't here to-day.

Me: What made you decide it was a girl gnome?

Margaret: Dunno. Just made it one.

Me: (talking with Chloe, Donna, Jane and Natasha).

Me: Is it a boy gnome or a girl gnome? (they shrug their shoulders. Their protagonist is female, I know now, because they will act it out later)

23.3.89

Me: (to Jane) Can I take your photograph? (She's writing at her desk.)

Jane: No

Me: Well will you take mine?

Jane: All right.

Me: Where do you want me to be?

Jane: Over in the library corner.

Me: OK, I'll get my writing. (she poses me in the library corner. A couple of boys come over and volunteer to use my camera also.)

Mr B: (later) Jane, would you go and get your writing and show Jeanette?

Jane: (nods yes ... later, volunteering a conversation with me) My Mum and Dad and my friends and that are going to Rocksted for Easter. (reading what she's written) "My Mum and Dad are getting the rabbits and I'm getting the horse. (she's written about school-made cookies in an Easter egg bag.)

Mr B: Kylie, come here sweetie.

A loud boy attempts to interrupt Eve. She ignores him, continuing with her writing as if nothing has happened.

11.4.89

Me: (to Lucy) That's a great pen. (it's thick and multi-coloured.) Where'd you get it?

Lucy: At K Mart.

Me: I'll have to get one. (pause) Do you always sit in these seats? (they have set places in the classroom. I've never seen them sitting on any other seats, although they often sit on the floor or outside on the ground.)

Chloe: (seriously) We don't sit here at play-time or at lunch-time.

Me: How did you get to work out where you'd sit? (They sit rigidly according to grade and gender.)

Lucy: We just did.

Me: How come the girls sit with the girls and the boys sit with the boys?

Chloe: 'Coz we wanna.

I chat to the woman accountant. Introduce myself. She tells me she comes out on Tuesdays but she's usually finished by the time I get there. Her children go to school at Rosedale, not here. I tell her briefly why I've come, about how I'm reading what girls write. She says, "Like you read the paintings they bring home from kinder." I say, "Yes." She wears a neat navy blue skirt and white blouse, stockings and navy blue shoes. I'm in jeans and big shirt with a scarf round my head. I'm probably ten years older than she is and maybe fifteen or so years older than Mr B. Mr B also wears jeans, with either a shirt or a jumper. Natasha is drawing, on Mr B's instructions, a detailed illustration of Red Riding Hood meeting the wolf. She's mapped out the road between the two houses.

Jane rumages in her desk to find me some stories to read. When I ask about what she's been writing she shows me labouriously written alphabetic script, the same letters over and over. She appears to see writing, the noun, as handwriting; and writing, the verb, as making written-down stories. Outside again. No sign of the girl writers. Instead I find a treated pine pole stuck in the ground with a brass plaque reading: "This tree was planted on 19th November 1987 to commemorate 125 years of education at Ruralville Primary School. 1862-1987". Beside the pole is a small dead casaurina.

2.5.89

Margaret: Do you wanna see what I wrote?

Me: OK. (Margaret hands me two pages of very neat handwriting) Do you want me to read it out loud or to myself?

Margaret: To yourself. (It's "The Day Jeanette Tried To Get Her L's.")

Aaron: Do you want me to photocopy this for you?

Me: OK. (he photocopies "Motorbike")

2.55 pm. Think I'll go now. They're all very busy with the electronics. Small groups crowding round the gear, all talking excitedly about it, and busy. Groups are same-sex and child-initiated, they just seemed to happen. The exception is Kylie. She sits on the back of the desk, the highest person in the school. With two big boys. Natasha is with Chloe, Donna and Jane. Her attention wanders occasionally as she looks at what other groups are doing.

Jane: Natasha get us a nail. Come on. Don't be so slow.(Lucy, Eve and Margaret are also together. They're all completely ignoring me, writing in my corner.)

9.5.89

2.32 pm. All the outside children come in.

Eve: (coming up to me) Jeanette guess what my story's called? It took me ages to think of it. (She's looking a little bit fat, I notice. Not just physically maturing.)
Eve: It's called, "In The Toilets I Found A Syringe". (dramatic pause and rolling of eyes)
Me: Uh huh. (Eve's waiting for more) Do you read the newspapers a lot?
Eve: Yes. (goes back to her desk where she begins writing quite ferociously beside Margaret)

Donna, Lucy and Chloe form their usual trio at the front, writing, looking up, chatting, looking around, examining scabs on knees.

Mr B: OK, we'll take a break then. We'll have a quick play time.
Matthew: (softly) Time for a Kit-kat.
Justin: (loudly) Mr B I did over a page.

Most go out to play. No-one volunteers to give me any writing.
2.40 pm and play time. Natasha, Margaret and Donna are still writing at their desks. Outside it looks like rain.

Troy: Mr B, Andrew is swearing at me.
Mr B: You tell Andrew I said to stop.

Anthony: Mr B, Brett Butler is writing a love letter.
Mr B: Were you away the other day Brett? You must have been away the other day when I was talking about it. (Meaningful pause)

Mr B: Hands up those people who need help with their story. (Margaret's hand goes up.)

Mr B: Hands up those people who are starting a new story.

(Lucy)

Mr B: Hands up those people who are going on with their story. (No other girls put their hands up. Kylie's drawing pink texta criss-crossed lines and cutting them out.)

Natasha: (to me) Mr B said I have to show it to you. (Big smile) Do you want me to read it to you?

Me: All right. (she does. It's "The Day I Got A Car". Kylie shows me "Little Red Riding Hood".

Me: Kylie, do you write at home sometimes?

Kylie: (silence)

Me: When no-body else writes what you want?

Kylie: (indignantly) I don't even TRY to write.(Kylie, Natasha and I photocopy the two pieces of writing.Jane is playing with a bit of pink wool she's found on the carpet. Winding it round and round the first finger of her left hand. Then unwinds it and starts again.)

Mr B: (calling out) Jane, you can go off and finish your story. (Jane goes silently to her seat and continues to carefully copy out her story. The "good" writing is a very neat version of the first draft.)

Margaret: (calling out) Ah, Mr B, you've made a mistake here. (Brings it out to him.)

Natasha: (comming up and putting her face right in front of mine)

Jeanette, Troy keeps on kissing me.

Justin: (comes and sits beside me) Jeanette do you want me to read you this?

Me: OK

Justin: (can't believe his luck) All of it? (Mr B had stopped correcting after three pages. It's very long.)

Me: OK

Brett: Jeanette I can't read your writing. (He's trying to read my field-notes over my shoulder.)

Me: Well, I just write it for ME.

Jane: (turning around) I can read it. (Skims it and points out her name.) Ohh, you're writing about me.

Me: (reading aloud what I've written about her.)

Jane: (silence)

Me: Jane I haven't got any photocopies of YOUR writing yet.

Jane: You can have this one. (gives me "My Friend")

6.6.89

When I arrive it's lunch-time. Natasha comes up to me immediately.

Natasha: What have you done to your hair?

Me: I got it cut.

Natasha: Oh (Pause. Then runs off.)

Donna and Kylie: (running up) Hello Jeanette.

Me: Hi. How are you two?

Donna: All right. (They run off. In the school-room at lunch-time Lucy is playing two-handed on the electric organ. Kylie watches. She wants me to play "Three Blind Mice." Eve and Margaret are side by side at the computers playing a game.)

Eve: (to me) Your hair looks better.

Me: Does it? Good.

Margaret: Yeah. It wasn't too good before.

Donna's colouring in a photocopied page, sitting at a desk. It's a picture of a man life-saver at the beach. Natasha is running around outside in a shiny green taffeta skirt. Looks like it's from the dress-up box. Jane's away. She's gone to the Philipines until September. Mr B is talking to a woman I don't know, though I've already noted the car beside the bike shed. We are introduced. She is Mrs L. Later she asks me if I am "out at the University". I say yes I am and then realize she means am I one of my own students. So I have to add, "I work out there as a lecturer, but what I'm doing here is for my next degree.". She nods and says she's "doing special ed." We talk briefly about case study work. Mine and hers. Still at lunch-time, Justin comes up and gives me his original draft of "When I Get My Motor Bike". Says he's got a better copy for himself. Natasha sits next to the Mrs L during Mr B's story reading. Leans over to get her attention. Mrs L puts her finger to her lips, effectively silencing Natasha and reinforcing the authority of Mr B. Mrs L is to be the new relieving additional teacher until a more permanent additional teacher is appointed. On the chalkboard is written:

"Famous Australian People
Sir Douglas Mawson"

Margaret: Sir Douglas Mawson was Mr B's famous Australian person. (Eve picked Nellie Melba. Margaret picked John McLennan-McLachlan.)

Eve: I like to write nice things about people. I don't know, I just like to cut out the bad bits. (conversation is about the Nellie Melba information which she's got out of a book.) Just the important stuff and what was nice.

Chloe: Mr B. (whining) I can't concentrate. (She's complaining about the noise.)

20.6.89

Outside, Lucy and Chloe are on the climbing frame, writing. Eve and Chloe seem to be annoying the boys until Eve runs in to report:

Eve: (to Mr B, loudly and indignantly) There's a dog got into the school ground. (Sees me, says in totally different voice, softly) Oh Jeanette, we remembered another part to the skipping song we did and you wrote down. (She gives me another line of it.)

Me: (to Margaret) You've got another teacher now. (Nod towards Mrs L)

Margaret: No that's just a reliever until we get another teacher. (Goes back to her writing.)

Margaret: (after quite a pause, she and I are both writing) I can't write to-day.

Me: Can't you?

Margaret: No. (pause) But there's a reason. (pause) My uncle died yesterday. (We talk for a while. About uncles, being sick in hospital, about coffins, about when Margaret made a cross for a dead calf.)

Margaret: Mr S was going to hit it over the head.

Mrs L: (loudly, across the room) Excuse me. Shush. (to Justin, near us)

11.7.89

Mr B gives me information out of the School Roll so that I can catch up with parents. Visit them at home. They've all volunteered, except Lucy's, who didn't come to the school council meeting I spoke at. Mr B says I can ring them up and ask them. Reading the Roll, I discover that Chloe and Kylie are sisters. The new teacher, Miss Y, is here now. The emergency's had to leave and be replaced. Miss Y's the same height as Eve. And she strokes Kylie's long fair hair.

Miss Y: (looking up from reading the story to the children) Mr B will I keep reading? (There's a bloke fixing a broken window. Lots of loud banging with a hammer.)

Me: Lucy, who threw the ball through the window?

Lucy: Aaron. Aaron Bourke.

Donna: Can me and Chloe have a photo together?

Me: If you're working together. (they go and pose in the library corner.)

Lucy: Can I be in it too?

Me: If you're working with them.

Eve: Mr B, Andrew's writing about me.

Mr B: (from the back of the room) Andrew, you know the rule.

Eve: (to Andrew, knowingly) See.

Me: (to Eve) What's the rule?

Eve: Oh. You're not allowed to write about anybody unless you've got their permission. (Pause) I don't mind Margaret writing about me.

Margaret: But we don't let the boys. (Kylie's transcribing "I am getting car sick because Dad drives too fast." Her self-generated sentence.)

Donna: (to Me) Can I take your photo?

Me: Yes. (She does. Margaret and Eve get ready to take it next.)

13.7.89

Mothers' directions for how to get to their houses.

Jackie: It's the hardiplank house on the same side as the school. You drive north from the school.

Marion: We're in the oldest place church. (Eve had answered my four o'clock phone call. Home by herself until six. We talked about interviews and visits.)

Jenny: You go past the Ruralsville sign. It's the first road on the right. In Stuart Street. It's the only house there. (Donna had answered my 4.05 phone call. They're home by themselves until six also.)

Ann: (after some discussion about where and when we'll meet. She suggests while she's on yard duty at high school. Then says at home after Brownies.) Up the road, up a little bit of a hill. Keep going until it flattens out and the road veers to the left and the right. There's a big triangle and there's another road that's dirt. We're beyond the triangle. Go along the bitumen road to the left. It's just there among the trees. You'll see our drive way and there's a letter box. And it's the only house.

The questions I planned to ask at the first home interviews were:

- How did ... begin to write?
- What sort of things get written at home?
- Where does ... see you write?
- Does she write about the same sorts of thing you did as a child?
- What do you imagine she might be like in ten years or so?

Selections from transcripts of interviews at home

3.30 pm Jackie, Chloe and Kylie

First I talk with Jackie, before the kids get home from school. She's got a week's leave. Working on her house. They came to Ruralsville early this year. They've built the house themsleves. She's done all the painting. Chloe screwed it down so it won't blow away in the wind. It's hardiplank. We talk mother talk until Chloe and Kylie come home from school. Then at the kitchen table they eat chocolate icecream and sweet biscuits. Kylie spills her chocolate milk. They play with the cats. Jackie answers the phone. Talks till I've gone. Kylie and Chloe show me their rooms. Terribly tidy. Books in boxes under the beds. Chloe's into horse drawing. They get me to sponser the Jump For Heart Skipathon. $2 each. Kitchen table talk transcript

Jackie: I remember form two, form two and probably form five. You had to find out what was in the newspapers, or on a TV show.

Kylie: (voice over her mother's, to me) Mum's Dad (pause while she gets it right) Mum's Mum died before she was even big enough to grow away, was even big enough. (voice fades out in some confusion)

Jackie: It's hard to think about it. I can hardly remember. (about when her children began to write)

Kylie: (interrupting, quickly) It started before grade prep that's all I know.

Jackie: (voice over) Kylie, don't do that darling.

Me: Did you write at home, as well as writing at school?

Kylie and Chloe: (both answer at once. Answer is incecipherable on the tape)

4.30 Margaret, Jenny and Donna

Donna meets me, takes me inside. We sit round the kitchen table. Jenny tells me they arrived in Ruralsville when Margaret started grade 3. She has got all their old writing out. She's kept everything since they were both in prep. We spend quite a while looking at it. Before I go, Margaret plays the electric organ for me. She's very good. We spend some time at it. I have a go too. Jenny talks about the music she'd like to have learned. Asks me about mine. Says Donna's going to play the saxaphone.

Jenny: They used to write on the blackboard, mostly, to start with. You know, my husband put it up on the wall. And they just used to write and scribble all over it. And they used to have paper and things like that. And, you know, I taught them the alphabet, but they didn't put it together in words or anything like that. They didn't actually learn words until they went to school. Margaret was, especially when she was learning to write her name, she used to get very frustrated. You know, to start with she couldn't do it, and so we used to rub out the mistakes. She didn't like to make mistakes, and we used to rub those out. (Pause) She usually, well with projects and that, she usually gets me to look through it to make sure she hasn't made any mistakes. We had a bit of a battle to start with. She wanted me to read, and as soon as I'd start reading and I'd say "Oh that's a spelling mistake" she'd think I was just looking for the mistakes and she'd get really cross. And when they went to school, well that's when they started to put things, well, when they were taught to put things in sentences. (We begin to look through Margaret's and Donna's old school books of writing.)

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Jenny: Margaret says she's going to marry an accountant.

Me: (to Margaret) You could BE an accountant.

Jenny and Margaret: (laugh)

Me: My accountant's a woman accountant. I don't know how much money she earns but it's quite a lot.

Sharon: We were discussing that this morning and she said, "No if you want to be an accountant you have to know maths too much". She wasn't terribly keen.

Me: I think you've got to work.

Jenny: There's a lot of keeping up to date. With an accountant things are always changing.

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5.30 Eve, Marion and John

Eve meets me with the dog. John's cooking. Talk with him over the kitchen bench. Mostly about my sons. They've both been his students at High School. Talk also with Marion, on easy chairs next to the centre-of-the-room heater. About the house, her print-making, her school bus driving. They give me pizza for tea. They came to Ruralsville a few years ago. As Eve and I are finishing our tea, Marion joins in the talk. John eats at the bench, doing a cryptic crossword. Eve takes me up to her room, shows me her desk. We talk about reading and writing. I go at 7 o'clock.

Eve: OK, what was the first question. When did I first start writing? Ah, I s'pose when I was in kinder, er, in prep. I drew a lot of pictures when I was little. Mum writes letters, letters to people. And he (John) does corrections, and he does school work. (John is a teacher)

Me: I don't know what my kids would say if I asked them that question.

Marion: We used to do lots of oral story-telling, and tape it, especially when we went on long trips to the country. They'd amuse themselves for hours, the stories would go on and on and on. Then on the way home they'd play it constantly.

Eve: See when I was little my Nana gave me a tape recorder. And me and my cousin, we used to kind of put on shows, and read stories and make up imaginary people there. Then play it over and over again. I played it back a while ago and you can't even tell which voice is which. It was fun, I reckon.

Me: So what about writing?

Eve: Writing. Um (coughs) when I was little I used to make up lots of stories, I used to make up stories in my head.

Me: Where?

Eve: Well, in our readers we used to have, um, when I was really little we used to say things to the teacher and the teacher would write it down.

Me: What sort of things?

Eve: Well, we'd make up a story about (pause) a rabbit. I was cleaning out my desk and I found all these old stories, like about animals, and they'd talk. And, um, and then we'd draw a picture about it.

Marion: And now you write to your cousin.

Eve: Mm. We're doing this thing about horses and I write to my cousin a lot. Well we're having, we're doing, like, all this horse research. I've been writing The Care Of Young And Old Horses. Like, they need special care. I've written a page or two about them. My cousin, her Dad (pause) he's a (pause) computer (pause) well his partner's in a thing called Amco, and we're going to put it out on disc. And then we can read it. But if we, I mean, we mightn't ever end up doing that. Anyway, the research is good. (coughs) I've got a very good book. My aunt gave it to me. Yeah, she gave me

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this book and it's got a lot of stuff in it, and this is why I chose my topic. And, um, I s'pose, if I have to I'll go to the library.

8.00 Ann, Peter and Lucy

The kids are peeping through a window. It's dark when I get there. At the time they said. Lucy runs in and out. Ann gets coffee. Peter quizzes me about my research. I need big words. Lucy runs off and plays the piano in the next room. We adults keep talking. They've been in Ruralsville eight years. I leave Peter and Ann to go to Lucy at the piano. I listen, admire, demonstrate on request. We talk. I'm a pianist too. Lucy is very skilled. She plays a Miriam Hyde and a grade two version of Fur Elise. Ann says she doesn't practice but she's playing in the Eisteddfod. Back to the living room. Lucy and I talk about the questions I've got. Peter and Ann there too, doing nothing but listening. They're still standing up. Though Lucy and I sit on cushions on the floor. Lucy gets out her Samoa project and stories written at home. Shows me the baby rabbits whose mother has died. Peter is defensive, sceptical, ungiving. Won't leave us alone. He teaches maths. Ann teaches science, as an emergency. Four kids. Lucy is number three. House is big, arty.

Me: How'd you start writing?

Lucy: Um. I started at school. When I was about four I started drawing the letters. And at school I started drawing words.

Me: And what were you writing ABOUT?

Lucy: Um. Notes. Um. I don't know.

Ann: What about cars?

Me: What do your Mum and Dad write about at home?

Lucy: (pause) I know. Dad correctez work. (He's a teacher.)

Ann: He writes ticks and crosses. (laughs)

Lucy: That's all.

Me: What about other poeple here?

Lucy: Well. Luke has to do home-work. Don't know about Grant.

Me: How old's Grant?

Lucy: Eleven. N' Luke just writes anything.

Lucy: I got twenty out of twenty. (She's showing me her school project on Samoa. She's been there.)

Me: What did the other kids do?

Lucy: Oh, Donna did Fish. I think she got eighteen out of twenty. And Eve did Hospital, and I don't know what she got: I think she got eighteen. Out of twenty. And (pause)

Me: What about Chloe?

Lucy: She did Bushrangers and she got nineteen out of twenty.

Me: What about Jane? Did she do it or was she too little?

Lucy: Nah.

Me: What about Margaret?

Lucy: She did, she got eighteen.

Me: Why is it (the project) at home?

Lucy: (as if this is a very dumb question) Because we've finished it.

Video Notes. November 1989

1. Margaret is outside in the schoolgrounds reading a set piece about herself.

Margaret: (interjecting her own reading loudly), Oh, they're watching. I'm not doing this. (puts hands over her face)

2. Boys outside, backs to camera. They're on the school camp. There's a noise of a piano being mucked around on in the background. The camera focusses on Margaret, playing with one finger. Kylie watches. Margaret stomps off when she sees she is being filmed. Kylie runs away too. In the dining hall women are getting a meal. Miss Y and a mother. The children sit down at two big tables to eat. They are served by the women.

3. Margaret and Eve are rolling a big barrel outside, watched by Chloe, Lucy and Donna. Where's Jane? There's a boy in the barrel. The rolling gets a bit rough.

Mr B (loudly) Righto. Hey. Hey Stop it. Someone's going to get hurt. (He loses control of his filming. Focusses his camera on the grass.)

13. On the boat. Very noisy, either the engine or the video camera. The children are all out on deck looking out at the water as they go. Except Eve and the mother, who are alone together in the cabin.

14. Two boys are interviewing each other.

James: (in highly affected voice), Hi. My name is Samantha, 'n I'm really cool, maybe because he's such a good kisser, yes I went out with Steven once.

15. Chloe (outside, seriously) reads aloud her self description.

16. Margaret and Eve miming outside with Chloe. Dressed up in long skirts. The play is about a murdured boy, who lies on the ground, dead.

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7.12.89

I drive to Ruralsville. Turn right at the pub. There are no shops. Just a pub, a telephone booth and a Rural Fire Brigade. 1.40 pm and Miss Y, the extra teacher, is reading aloud to the children. No-one is looking at her. They're all cutting and pasting, colouring or flicking over book pages at their desks. All seven girls wear elasticized bands in their hair. Donna wears a pink towelling band around a top-knot. Lucy, a pink towelling band in her hair and a green band at her neck. Like Donna, her top-knot is a fountain of hair. Chloe has a long pony-tail held together with a yellow elastic band. Eve, two black towelling bands and combs. Lucy, two blue bands on top and also at the back of her head. She's very neat. Kylie, two very thin plaits, which she uses as paint brushes against her cheeks. Also uses them to brush Troy's cheeks quite often as they work. Jane, why do I have no notes about Jane? I've said there are seven girls here today.

Eve: (to me) Jeanette when are you coming to our houses again?
Me: Well, I have to go to Melbourne. After that.
Eve: Because we've got a really big Christmas tree. It comes right up...

14.12.89

Now Margaret and Lucy are in the book corner, both of them turning the pages of a shared book, and discussing what it says. Donna is reading "How Father Christmas Had a Long and Difficult Journey Delivering His Presents," also in the book corner. Now 11.27 am. Margaret and Eve have moved so that they sit side by side, backs against the bookshelves, legs stretched out, so close they touch from shoulder to thigh. Independent silent reading of simple comic style hardbacks. 11.32 am. Lucy joins them, but with a space between herself and Donna. Cross-legged. Doesn't stay long. Chloe's still reading silently in front of Mr B at her desk. The only one who just keeps on.

Donna: (reading aloud to Mr B.)
Mr B: No, not 'bra'. (He giggles) It's got 'bra' in it. 'Braces'. (Donna reads 'braces' instead of 'bra'. Then stops.)
Mr B: (reading) "Jaunty Jodphurs". Do you know what jodphurs are?
Donna: (quietly) No. (He describes them.11.40 AM and all are writing. Eve is at the computer.)
Margaret: (standing up and asking Mr B a question) Is that how you spell it?
Mr B: Put a hyphen in it.
Kylie: (at table and chair, first-drafting in pencil)
Jane: (standing up, leaning on her desk and looking at other children's writing)
Chloe: (writing with biro, sometimes chewing it, talking about her writing a bit with Jane and Lucy, who then turns around and watches.) There we are. That should do. (Jumps up, takes the bit of paper

she's been writing on out to the computer. Has to queue. Mr B and Miss Y are both busy helping other children at the computer.)

Miss Y: Sit DOWN, please Kylie. (Kylie sits down and continues writing.)

Stories being written today:

Margaret: "The Night I Saw Santa"
Eve: "Could You Please Pass This Letter On To Liz..."
Jane: (blank page. Finally goes to the chalkboard ledge and gets the hand-written booklet entitled "Story Ideas". Reads it.)
Chloe: "I Had a Puppy. His name is Luppy"
Lucy: "The Day Margaret Got Her L Plates" (good copy)
Kylie: "Hi. What's Your Name? Margaret."
Donna: "The Day I Went to School" (on computer from handwriting)

21.12.89

I leave Glenn in the only pub in Ruralsville while I visit some of the girls at home. I give each of them a book as a Christmas present. Glenn says the talk in the pub is all about horse racing and betting. He says it's a men-only place: "You just wouldn't go go there as a woman."

Lucy and Eve and Donna are riding their bikes home to Jackie's. She's Kylie and Chloe's mother. The girls tell me they all go there after school every day now.

Me: Do you ever play with the boys after school?
Eve: No, we never do. We do at school sometimes, but we don't have an after-school relationship.

19.2.90

Mr B begins to read the serial story about a fantastic Mr Fox. There is an interuption as a man Mr B's age arrives at the school. The new man sits beside Mr B and they both talk rural-teacher talk for five minutes. The children get on with their colouring, texta sorting and day-dreams. I am not introduced. I am at the side of the room writing this. Donna comes over to me and asks how to spell my name. She writes it down. Mr B resumes reading after the man visitor goes. Chapter 16 and it's titled "The Woman."

Mr B:(reading) "They saw a huge woman coming down the stairs..." (The Australian flag is flying today. It's Monday. I suppose they salute it and sing the National Anthem at the start of the week.)

Mr B: (reading) "They knew Mrs Fox would be waiting..." "that ought to cheer up poor Mrs Fox..." "back to my beautiful bride..." (On the wall there is a large Humpty Dumpty, together with the words "All the King's horses and all the King's men.")

Mr B: (reading) "I just want to say this, 'My husband is a Fantastic Fox..." "This (delivery mail?) is by courtesy of Mrs..." (Mr B is quite enthusiastic about the reading of this story. He's been reading it now for 20 minutes. Maybe he's hoping to finish it. He does.)

Mr B: (reading) "(3 men) sat with their guns on their laps."

The "Fantastic Mr Fox" book belongs to Kylie.

Me: (to Donna as Donna walks past on her way to the photocopier) Donna, how did you decide to sit so that all the girls are in one row and all the boys are in the other?

Donna: Oh, it just happened.

Me: Did it?

Donna: Well Mr B said, "Find a partner you want to sit next to", and that's how we did. (Pause while she reads my handwritten notes as I write this.) Oh, do you write down everything we do?

Me: Sometimes. (pause)

19.3.90

Such a lot of effort for them to write. Jane has that bent forefinger, tightly gripped pencil hold, carefully transcribing from her rough draft to her book. A texta decorated edge. Justin's at the computer, the first time I've seen any of them composing at the machine. I show him how to type two handed. His head's at an awful angle as he twists it to see the page on the left of his keyboard. Two fingers are so slow. Playtime, and Donna is writing, on the floor. Cross-legged, leaning the book against a book cover. Chloe's co-operative, tells me about her horse. Matthew's still hard at work on the Microbee. I've brought out six new books for them. They rush to check them out.

Donna: We've got that.

Me: So now you've got two.

16.10.90

I've been overseas for five months. Hurried notes. My first visit here since March. It's awfully windy. I'm almost blown away walking in. Arrived an hour ago and now it's 2.50 pm. I finally sit down to scribble some notes. The girls have overwhelmed me. They rush up and talk to me, show me their writing, ask me about my trip around the world. Lucy says, "Jeanette are you dying your hair?" so I tell them about the accident with the shampoo in Greece. Jane was the first to rush up to me! With her book. The others all seem terribly pleased. Brett wants me to photocopy his story, "The Secret Club". I'm flat out interacting. Spend time with Kylie at lunch time. Photocopy all Donna's and Jane's writing that they give me. Will do Chloe's and Lucy's next week. A new young man in a football windcheater turns up at playtime. He chats first with the older boys about football. Then he checks out the computers. After play he tells the older children how to use a different word processor.

Man: (in very loud voice) We can work with the file. We can remove the file. (He leaves without being introduced to me or speaking to me.)

22.10.90

Spot check during writing time.

Kylie: twisting a pencil round and round into the end of a gumnut. Sitting at her table, feet up on a chair.

Donna: poking the first finger of her left hand into her mouth. She seems to be feeling between her teeth. She's standing in a queue waiting to show Mr B her writing. She wanders over to check out Matthew at the computer.

Lucy and Chloe: talking to each other. They look at me and giggle. Lucy's white-inking-out something on her page. Chloe's bending over her desk-top, writing with her left hand. Stops to walk around the room a bit. Lucy's using sticky tape. There are generations of school girls behind them.

Jane: Why do I always write about her last? She's looking behind her, the pencil sideways in her mouth. She writes occasionally, keeping an eye on what is happening in the room.

30.10.90

Me: Kylie, do you sometimes wish there were other girls at this school your age? (She's age and gender isolated.)

Kylie: Yep. (appears unconcerned)

Me: Do you know any other girls who are six? (She's six.)

Kylie: Nup. (pause) Well there's Jodie's big sister.

Me: How old is she?

Kylie: She's six.

Me: Does she live near here or does she live a long way away?

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Kylie: Oh, she goes to the ... school. (half an hour away)

Justin's still hogging the computer. The other two computers are not in use. Justin gives me a print-out of his story. The relieving woman teacher has a noisier school than Mr B. The girls call out more. Kylie hops around the room, says she can't think what to write. She's writing "The Show". Sits at a blank page ignoring the woman teacher's leads, gentle requests and questions. There is a displayed list of lead words that were written up by the teacher during a discussion.

Mrs L: Kylie, sit down quietly please. (Kylie is quite different without Mr K there. She throws a rubber across the classroom)

Mrs L: Kylie, go and pick it up please.

Chloe pokes a green texta in front of her mouth. She has the lid between her teeth so that the felt tip goes into the round space. She has not yet photocopied her writing for me. The talking gets louder and louder. Mrs L turns around and tells them all to sit in their own seats.

Mrs L: Aaron, sit in your own seat. Anthony, you sit down too. (She has just been talking to me about the future of the Faculty, a topic she initiated. She says she has just finished Special Education. Kylie is tapping me on the arm with her pencil)

Kylie: Jeanette how do you spell "horse"?

Me: Kylie I'm busy writing.

Mrs L: (to Kylie, about her writing) What else did you see, Kylie? Did you enjoy that? Was it good? (Kylie has not answered. The woman teacher walks away. Kylie laughs loudly, roughly folds the paper she's writing on and stuffs it between the tables, talking to herself as she goes.

Kylie: (to two Prep boys opposite her) Youz, yer do this. See. (She's rolling a lid across her paper. She's written "Show" on one side, "I saw a saddle horse" on the other side. She reads to herself the list of things from the Show.)

Jane and Donna come back from outside. They're sitting up on their desk lids facing the two big boys in the desk usually behind them. Jane's wriggling her loose front tooth. Then she turns around and begins to write rapidly in red biro.

Mrs L: (over the din) All right, you can all go to play now. (Jane puts her writing in her home locker. I ask if I can see it, but she says she doesn't like it.)

Me: What's it about?

Jane: A ghost train.

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19.11.90

Me: (with Kylie in the sand pit) Would you rather copy out what's in the book or would you rather make up your own writing?

Kylie: I'd rather make up my own.

Me: Why?

Kylie: I need to go to the toilet. Would you wait here while I go to the toilet?

Me: Yes. (she runs off.)

Kylie: (initiating my topic on her return.) Well I like copying out as well coz I can colour in the pictures. (pause) I like writing my own, but sometimes I get too bored writing my own. I can't think properly. One time I did that, guess what I wrote?

Me: What?

Kylie: Well one time we all write the same thing. (shows me "I can not think of any diary.")

10.12.90

I telephone Ruralsville School in the morning. Donna answers. I ask if it's all right for me to go out there that afternoon. I expect her to say, "Hold on, I'll get Mr B." Instead she says, "Yes, that'll be all right." and calls out to him.

Donna: Mr B Jeanette's coming out this afternoon.

Mr B: All right.

Me: Thanks Donna. I'll see you then. (I hang up.)

1.00 pm. It's lunch time at Ruralsville Primary School.

1.40 pm and Kylie's sitting with two boy preps at the low tables.

Kylie: (to the boys) You know. Guess why I'm sticking these bits up. 'Cos when it's dry you can do that with it.

Troy: How do you do that?

Kylie: Look, like this.

Mr B is overseeing Troy's writing project as well as directing the others. Occasionally he leaves the group to go to the computer. He talks to Troy soto voce.

Mr B: (in slightly raised voice, to Lucy and Chloe) If you two girls sitting on bean bags in the library corner have finished, you can go on to your writing.

Lucy pulls Chloe to her feet and they both go back to their shared desk. Chloe's got bare feet, denim jacket, brightly pattered loose long shorts, loose long hair. She's bent over "A Gruesome Story", which she is transcribing from her loose paper to her book. Lucy helps Troy to photocopy his Santa Claus story. She takes out the paper holder and refills it. Chloe gets up and helps them without being asked.

Lucy: (to Chloe) It's still flashing. (the light on the computer)

Chloe: (getting up from her desk) Press that. (raising her voice to Mr B) It gets half way through that and then it stops. And it says "Press clear".

Mr B: (to Chloe from where he works with the circle of readers.) Oh just leave it. It's done that before.

Me: (quietly, to Chloe) What did Mr B say?

Chloe: He said just to leave it.

Me: How will it get fixed?

Chloe: (shrugs her shoulders and resumes writing)

Chloe: (aloud to herself) Nice, trice, concise. (playing with rhymes.)

Lucy: Place, space. (she scrunches up a piece of paper, gets a new piece out from the cupboard behind the sliding doors.

Me: Matthew is it OK if I stay sitting in your desk?

Donna: Yeah, he doesn't mind. Do you Matthew?

Matthew: That's OK.

Kylie: (calling out) Mr B, could you please come here? (without waiting for him) Can you please tell me how to spell 'sleigh'? (She's sitting at her table. He's on the other side of the room.)

Mr B: Sleigh (repeating the word after her)

Kylie: Yeah. (Mr B writes 'sleigh' on the board at the front. Kylie is sucking the end of her fine texta, standing up and reading through what she has written.)

Kylie: (going up to me) Jeanette look what I've written all by myself.

Me: Wow. (pause) Do you remember when I first came here at the start of last year and you'd just started school and you couldn't write anything?

Kylie: I couldn't even write 'on'.

Me: I know. (pause) Exciting isn't it?

Kylie: Yeah. (grins)

Me: Would you make me a photocopy of your story?

Kylie: Yes. (She does. Then she goes and gets a book. Reads it aloud cross-legged on the floor, sometimes pointing to the words.)

Luke: How long till play-time Mr B?

Mr B: Oh, (looking at clock on the wall) eleven minutes. (These kids have all got constant teacher access.)

Mr B: (to Brett at the computer) OK. Well you need to load it now. Press F5.

Brett: F2? F1?

Mr B: Well you don't need it now. Just turn it off. (to Kylie) Kylie, can you pack up now and go to play?

Me: Kylie, could you get me the book you've just been reading? (She does) Did you read it all?

Kylie: No. I'll show you where I got up to. (she has a habit of tapping me on the arm to get my attention.)

19.2.91

Mr T is the teacher today. Although Mr B is away, the set-up is the same. The kids listen while the teacher reads them a story at half past one. The story seems to be about two men and "Miss Whizz." Kylie and Troy have moved from the infant tables to the smallest desk at the front. Jane and Donna look quite big behind them. All three girls wear bright lipstick pink tops. Lucy and Chloe are busy drawing with textas in the back row on the big kids side. Mr T says he's up to chapter 4. Gets the kids to chorus "Good Afternoon" to me. They've never done this before. I say they call me Jeanette. Mr T says "aksed" instead of "asked." He makes the children put their hands up. He says, "I want to see what you are up to." Donna and Chloe ask to go outside. He says "yes." Jane comes up to me and says, "I'll show you how much I've done." She wrote four pages yesterday. I ask if I can read it but she says she's "workin' on it."

Donna: (to Mr T, with her hand up) Can I please clean the fish tank?

Mr T: No. You've got to work on your story till Playtime. You can clean it after Play.

Jane: (To Mr T, with her hand up) Can I please work outside?

Mr T: No. We've got two outside.

Anthony: (interjecting) We usually have four.

Mr T: Well when they come back I'll choose two more. (Nobody points out the discrepancy between his idea of four and theirs.)

David: Mr T can I please sit in a bean bag? (They usually sit wherever they like.)

Mr T: Yes.

The title of the book being read aloud by Mr T is "You're Nicked Ms Wis." Mr T has pronounced it "Miss". It's written by Terence Blacker and it was short-listed in the UK for the Children's Book Award 1988. Its writer is described as "TB was born in 1948 and lives in London with his wife and two children."

Mr T: (reading page 1 of the book) "Mr Bailey was standing in front of her desk. "Sorry Sir," she said quietly. "I was thinking about my cat." "Your what?" ..."My cat. Wait." "Oh, I see," said Mr Bailey. "Here we all are in the middle of an English lesson ..."

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I hear Donna and Jane in the back room. They're not outside after all. They're writing in the back room with two boys.

Me: (to Donna and Jane) Have you got any questions you'd like to ask me? (I've asked them quite a lot today. About their book selections.)

Donna: Yes. How come your hair's got those gray bits at the sides? (She is not being rude, just curious, I think. She sees no reason why the genre of the questioning cannot include the personal, though I had thought her questions would be about literacy matters, as mine were.)

Me: That's because I'm old enough to have some gray hair and I've decided not to dye it.

Jane: What are all them things on your neck? (I am obliged to explain the undesired presence of large numbers of moles! My questioners then return to their writing with nothing further being said.)

1.50 pm. Kylie is the only child left in the room. In spite of Mr T's orders about there being only two out at a time.

Me: (quietly, to Kylie, who is beside me) Where's Donna?

Mr T: (from across the room, answering for Kylie, although not asked) She's gone to the toilet. (It's a mighty long toilet trip! I didn't need the answer though. I wanted to know if Kylie knew where Donna was.)

Jane's writing today is "Slumber Party." Donna's writing is "Three Pigs and the Big Boy Troll." Kylie is drawing another flower.

Me: (to Kylie) Why don't you do some writing?

Kylie: Oh I haven't got any pencils.

Me: Do you like doing drawings better than doing writing?

Kylie: Uh-huh. (pause) I have to think what to write.

2.15 and Mr T rings the bell. Lucy and Chloe swagger back into the classroom with their arms around each other. Mr T has got them all together to listen to what he wants to say. I thought it was Playtime. He conducts a sort of shared Personal News Time cum Organization Time.

Mr T: Right. So after recess everybody knows what they're doing.

At Playtime I go home. On the way to my car I see that Chloe's got everyone except the three smallest boys and Kylie doing handstands in a circle on the grass. She counts loudly 1 2 3 and on 3 up they all go. She judges the worst and excludes them from the next round. All the older boys in the school are doing what she says.

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25.2.91

A very hot day. There's a big overhead fan spinning round and round in the classroom.

Mr B: (to me) We're just surviving today. You'll find them (the children) somewhere. (The four older girls are all outside. The chalkboard reads "It is going to be very hot today. I would like to be at the pool." Kylie is seated between the two little boys her age.)

Kylie: Mr B can I use the Apple (computer)?

Mr B: All right. Now when we write a story what's the first thing we have to think about? (Silence, then there is talk about "putting yourself into it" or not.)

Mr B: And another thing is where the story is going to be.

Kylie: Can we do a picture?

Mr B: Well you might need to do the story first.

Kylie: My story's about the penguin we found at the beach.

Mr B: So it's about something you've done. Well if you've made up your mind about what you're going to do, you can take your gray lead pencils outside and write somewhere under a tree.

Justin writes a footy story at the computer. Anthony works on the school photo album. Donna wanders in, sorts through some papers and then wanders out. David, Kylie and Troy take their things outside. Mr B follows them. I'm left in the schoolroom with Justin and Anthony. There is no perceptable change in what they do as Mr B leaves. I am writing this. Silence. The fan makes a whirring electronic noise but only affects the middle of the room. Jane, Kylie and Chloe stroll back with Mr B, who goes over to Justin at the computer. Chloe's singing. Lucy wanders in.

Lucy: Mr B our house is the coolest house in Ruralsville.

Kylie is lying on her back under a small table. Her paper and gray lead pencil are beside her. She wears pale pink shorts, a small cut-off top and white peep-toe sandals. Her sister sits cross-legged beside her, rearranging papers in her double ring binder.

Lucy: (from the back of the room to Mr B at the front) Mr B I'm going to stay up late tonight.

Mr B: Why is that?

Lucy: Cos tonight we're getting our computer.

Mr B: What sort are you getting?

Lucy: An Apple Mackintosh. (silence)

Jane: Mr B when I finish this story I'm going to print it out on the computer.

Mr B: You mean you're going to publish it.

Jane: Yeah.

Mr B: You've been working on that one for a while. (It's "Slumber Party", written in red biro.)

Lucy is sitting sprawled in a green vynal bean bag, her big blue writing folder resting between her legs. Wearing a sun hat inside the classroom, and sucking the end of her biro. Puts her sneakered right foot up on her left knee so that the blue folder hides her face from my gaze. Gets on with her writing. Kylie is standing with her writing beside Mr B. There are scratched mosquito bites on her legs. Now Kylie is writing, on all fours under the table. There is a boy at each computer terminal. Mr B sits back to fix Jane's writing. Tells her about rules for adding "ing."

Mr B: (to Jane) All the right letters, all mixed up. (They smile at each other. She's wearing tight black netball pants, a fashion headband, red and yellow sox and sneakers with matching laces.)

Me: (to Kylie) Why don't you sit here? (She sits next to me)

Kylie: I'll read it. (She does. "On Sunday I went to the beach". It's her "Penguin Story".)

Me: See this bit (I point to "him") How did you know it was a him?

Kylie: Oh Mum said it was a baby boy. (I suspect she makes this up.)

Me: Did she guess?

Kylie: Mmm. (Pause.)

Me: (pointing to "it") What about this "It"?

Kylie: I did the word before Mum said it was a him.

Me: I thought you might have.

Kylie: Well I'd better go now. (She knows what has happened semantically. And I know I've been inappropriately invasive.)

Me: OK. Thanks.

Lucy strolls over to Aaron at the computer. He puts both his hands over the screen so she can't read it. She goes over to the books I've brought. She has been carefully ignoring me.

Lucy: (to Mr B, who is further away from her than I am) Mr B are these books from Jeanette?

Mr B: Yes. (She still ignores me. Sits down and starts reading one aloud.)

Chloe sits cross-legged on a table, reading over what she's written. Kylie is out the front looking through a microscope. Jane sits beside Mr B. They laugh aloud at her spelling of "famous". David plays boppity games by himself with chalk on the chalkboard ledge. Then he draws what looks to me like a little bird's face down at the bottom of the board. Kylie draws on her hand and Mr B attends to Jane at the computer.

David: Mr B look what I done. I drawed a little person.

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Matthew: (acting on his own initiative) I'll ring the bell. (He gets the hand bell and walks around ringing it inside and out. This makes the time Playtime. It is 2.30. Mr B's not fussy about time.)

Chloe is still at the back of the room reading one of my books. So is Lucy.

Chloe: Hey Matthew have you got a girl friend?
Matthew: Nup.
Chloe: Well I know one who really likes you.
Matthew: Who? Jacinta Green?
Chloe: Nup. (She walks away from him.)

Although it is Playtime they are all inside. It is just too hot to be out. Little groups of children do things quietly. The phone rings for Mr B. He tells another teacher in another town the wind is not good. A strong north-westerly and it's hot as hell. As I drive home my car radio tells me there are bush fires in Woodsby and in Mt Furrow. About 30 and 40 minutes away by road. I remember seeing the waiting red fire truck sitting in the driveway of its shed as I left the school.

12.3.91

Aaron comes straight up to me as I arrive and gives me a hard copy of his football story. Chloe and Lucy and sitting back to back on the carpeted floor across the room, writing. Using each other's backs as a support. Donna's by herself in her desk, hand-writing in green biro. Big thick plastic multi-choice biros are still the rage here. Justin asks Chloe how to spell the word he wants to type at his computer.

Donna: (coming up and giving me a hand-written copy of her "Three Little Pigs" story.) Don't read it. It's dumb.
Me: What will I do with it?
Donna: You can read it if you like.

26.3.91

I arrive early. Mr B is checking the video. Chloe and Donna are playing with the boys. Now Chloe and Luke have Brett by the feet and hands carting him off. The other boys follow.

Kylie: (coming up to me in the playground) Julie's goin' ta get her baby on my birthday.
Me: Is she?

Kylie: Mmm (pause)

Me: Who's Julie?

Kylie: She's my sister.

Mr B: (reading aloud to all the children) "Mrs Brown was having a very busy morning ...so intent was she in reaching her baby..." (he shows them the picture) That's Mrs Brown fainting in the bath. (Kylie is colouring in a computer print-out invitation to her birthday party in two months time.)

Mr B: (reading) ... "into the arms of her husband who had been parking the car. 'What have you been doing to my wife?...'

28.5.91

Mr F arrives, one of my ex-students, now a teacher. After a while I introduce myself, though we have virtually no conversation. He's gone straight over to Mr B without noticing me. The two men talk about rural school organization. Mr F uses my first name loudly to say goodbye from across the room as he leaves the school. I ask Lucy and Chloe for some photocopies. They say "No". Justin volunteers and gives me "Possum".

4.6.91

Lucy's writing "Holidays". Troy, aged seven, is typing up a shark story, "A shark came in to the bay where I was swimming then life guards shout SHARK and everyone swam to the sand." He asks Mr B for printing instructions and prints it out on the Apple.

Mr B: (to Anthony, in grade 6) I'd like to see you publish this in some other format. Not in computer format. I'd like to see you put your energies into something other than computers at school.

Chloe: Lucy, go back and do ya OWN work.

David comes over to me and I begin to read his story aloud: "Robot". He finished reading it for me. And photocopies it. Also brings over his "Possum Story". Play-time begins. Donna says out loud, "Save and Keep" as she closes her computer file. Kylie goes to the Apple computer and starts to type up "Holidays".

23.7.91

Me: (to Anthony)) How come you're all doing wizard things?

Anthony: I dunno. Just a little project, I s'pose. (The wizards are all men. The witches are all women.)

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Kylie is painting on the floor. Big brush. Smock. Black paint. Mr B is writing at the younger children's dictation, using texts on card. The children are trying to make each line rhyme. Donna and Lucy explain to me the "World Magic Championship" work they've been given to do. They give it to me to photocopy. Outside, it's raining. Hard.

22.10.91

Kylie: (to me) I want a dinky diary. You get them in the Meyer catalogue stickers. So I can write (at home) like at school. Chloe's got a dinky diary but I don't know what she does in it.

Mrs X: (the relieving teacher while Mr B is on long service leave for the term. She's my age.) We look up information and write it down. (telling the children how to do social studies projects)

Lovely. Excuse me. Children, don't rule here. (showing page of book)

Pairs for projects.
Justin and Anthony: Yabbies
Lucy and Brett: Dogs
Kylie, Troy and David:
Donna and Chloe:
Luke and Aaron:
Matthew and Jane: (Justin tells me, "They got stuck with each other. The rest of us chose who we wanted to be with.")

5.11.91

Lunch-time, and four big boys are on the roof of the shelter shed as I drive in. Unspoken conspiracy. They know I'll keep quiet about it, but they get down via the nearest tree.

Kylie: (running up to greet me) I didn't know it was you at first. (I'm wearing sunglasses.) Your hair's long. (But I was here two weeks ago and it's always loose nowadays.)

Appendix C: The Interviews

The following are selections from transcripts of the last series of interviews with each of the girls in the study. The interviews were conducted in the first half of 1992, which was the fourth year of the project. The girls and their parents chose the time and the place, though I did not give the school as one of the place options. The length of the interview depended on how it seemed to be going. I initially asked for half an hour, but the interview was extended if it seemed to be productive use of time, if the girl said she was to be happy to keep talking, and if it was all right with a parent. Here the interviews are presented in the order of the girls' ages, beginning with the youngest. At the time of the interviews the girls ranged from age eight to age fifteen. Here they recall the writing they did when they were up to four years younger. The interview consisted of each girl looking at her writing file with me, and discussing what she wrote and what she remembered of the school at that time. *** indicates breaks in the transcript.

Kylie: in her bedroom (aged eight, 1.6.92)
(4.45 pm - 5.15 pm)

When I ask her on the phone if she'd agree to talk about her writing that I've got photocopies of, she said, "When?" And when I said Monday after school would suit me, she said, "Well Sunday would be better. Could you make it Sunday?" I said I couldn't. Then I talked with her mother.

When I drive up to her house she comes to the door, takes me into her bedroom and we sit on the floor. Both her Mum and her Dad are out, but this is the time her mother told me on the phone would be all right. Her teenage brother is there, and Chloe, her sister, with a group of her friends I haven't seen before.

K is very interested in her 1989-1991 writing. Insists on reading nearly all of it out loud as we talk about them.

K: (reading "I Like to do Very Very Hard Sums")
Me: That's interesting. Are you good at sums?
K: I can do sums better than Troy. (her age)
Me: (reading "On Saturday I Said") So you're looking after your Mum are you?
K: Yep. (reading "I Like School") See there, that's where I started joining (letters together). I don't really like school. But I like home OK. (reading "We Have Two Chinese Men") Well do you know about

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this? We had these two Chinese men and they had to stay at our place. (pause) If only I remembered where I put my Prep book. You know why I need my Prep book? It has their names written on it. (pause) ALL of these are mine. (these pieces of writing)

Me: This is your file. I just brought your file. Is this one true? (reading) "I like to go shopping with my Mum."

K. Yes. (reading "Mr B is a Good Teacher") This one, I wrote "I hate Mr B" (She's got "I A" at the top of the page) and so he made me write "Mr B is a good teacher" (below it). (She laughs) And I did this stupid picture of him deliberately.

****

K: (reading "One Day Sally Went Shopping") What's that say? (seeing my scribble in the corner of her photocopy)

Me: That's what Mr B said and what I said. (reading) Mr B said to me, "If she could write the way she talks," and I said "You mean, she'd write a lot." And he said, "It's a bit of a worry, getting the writing out of her. She's so slow. Good little reader though."

K: (laughs)

Me: Was he right?

K: He USED to be. (I think she means she used to be like that.) (K reads "When I Went to Perth")

Me: (reading "My Magic Spell") Oh this is writing where you just have to copy out something someone else has written. What do you think of that kind of writing,where you don't make up any stuff yourself?

K: (pause) Well I don't really like it, because I don't really think we should be, we should be writing out what WE think. I should have only had to do that when I was in grade Prep.

Me: So when you were in prep you couldn't write what you thought? Is that right?

K: Yeah, because I had to (here I lose a bit of the transcript, as the side of the tape ran out and I didn't notice)

****

Me: How did you come to write this one? (reading "The Wild Woolly Child")

K: We already had it and Mr B made us write it down.

Me: What do you mean you already had it?

H: Like we had the book at school.

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Me: (reading "The Lion Gets Away") This one (reading aloud) Tim and Justina were good friends." Is that unusual, to be good friends, and a girl and a boy?

K: Oh very. Maybe if you're younger. Like Mick and me. I'm a lot older and he's just very new down here. We're best friends because he doesn't like playing with the other big kids. (I imagine she means the other boys his age, and her age, won't play with him.) he's scared. Can we read the next?

Me: This is really early stuff I think.

K: (reading "I Have a Horse", then "We Have Cows", then "I Got an A For Hurdles")

Me: Have you changed much since you were a Prep?

K: Yes. (pause) A lot. I've learned to write better. I've learned to join (join letters together). Like this other girl at this other school she wasn't allowed to join til grade 4. I started in grade 1.

Me: Yeah, but that's in writing. What about as a person?

K: Well, (pause) I don't know how I actually got like that. I just kept trying and things. I wouldn't give up. I still try and beat Brett at soccer, like when I play with him sometimes. Like last night I got about three goals. This one is "I am getting car sick because Dad drives fast." (She has turned the page to read the next piece.) That's when I don't like it. (reads "Little Red Riding Hood") (reads "One Day") Mr B made us write, it's one of them books where you have to think up what actually happened. And I have a picture of a boy asleeping. (reads "Donkey") And this is a thing about a donkey. I just made it up. And this one (reading "I am a Kangaroo") I did this one a few days later.

Me: That's actually the very first one I got from you. I look at the dates on them.

K: Oh yeah.

Me: So it's two weeks before. It's the very first thing that you did. (She's copied over the words already on the page.)

K: Oh yeah. (reads it aloud) And I draw a kangaroo. And Mr B wrote "It's cute."

Me: Did he decide to put that?

K. Yeah.

Me: What did YOU think?

K: I think it was fairly dumb.

Me: Yeah. And he says "it". Was it an "it"? (pause) An "it" kangaroo?

K. It was a "she" actually.

Me: Yeah, that's what I thought. Because

K: It's got a pouch. Can we go back and do them again?

Jane: in her living-room at home (aged ten, 1.6.92)
(4.00 pm - 4.40 pm)

Her Dad answers the phone. Jane is out. He says, "yeah, that'll be OK." I ask him if he'll be home then or if Jane's mother will be and he says he will. I also ask him to ask Jane if she wants to do it and to ring me back if she doesn't. When I get there he greets me warmly and we talk about the chooks he's just about to feed. They're free range and come running up to me.

Jane is inside watching tele. She is calm and smiling. I show her how to work the tape recorder and after a while she plays a bit back, gets up and turns off the tele. No talk about this. Takes a long, long time pouring over each piece of writing. Treats them as valuable artifacts, which indeed they are.

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Her Mum is there, and also her grandparents as I am going. We talk briefly. They're not going to Asia this year.

Me: You write a lot about money. Are you going to make a lot of money when you are older?

J: Ah, I don't know.

Me: What are you going to do?

J: When I am older?

Me: Mmm.

J: Oh, I said to Mum that I wanted to be a cook. So I can go around the world and cook.

****

Me: (reading "Slumber party") When the shark comes along and eats the person is it a boy or a man? (Jane has written "he".)

J: Um, I didn't think of that. (pause) I think it was a man, not a boy.

Me: Why was that?

J: Um, 'cos men usually go out deeper.

Me: So you think men are more likely to get eaten by sharks.

J: Yeah. On the movies it's always the men that get eaten up (by shark attacks).

Me: (reading "Super Donna") Is Donna your best friend now?

J: Oh, she used to be, but now Lucy is.

Me: Oh. Because Chloe's left.

J: Yeah. Oh she (Donna) plays with Melanie, she's a new girl, (Donna is). She's in grade 5. She came about a month ago.

****

Me: (reading "A Look into the Future") (reading aloud)

"We went six hundred years back in time". You wrote about being chased quite a lot didn't you? (reading "they were wild and they chased us") I remember I asked you about dreams once. Sometimes people write in their stories what they were dreaming about.

J: Um, I don't think so. I think I just made that one up.

****

Me: Do you write at home or just at school?

J: Oh, only if we have to.

****

Me: Is it OK if I use some of your writing when I talk about it, if I show it to other people?

J: Yeah.

Me: I wouldn't use your real name. Can you remember what the name was that you asked me to use?

J: Ah, I forgot. Just use "Jane", that's my middle name.

Donna: in her living room at home (aged eleven, 28.5.92)

(4.00 pm - 4.35 pm)

I talk with her on the phone and she arranges it. I ring her again that night to check it's OK. She's quite a lot taller now. Out riding her bike as I arrive. Her Mum is welcoming. Makes me a cup of coffee. Sits me and Donna in the living room.

(Silence for a long time as Donna reads her writing.)

D: That one doesn't look like my writing.

Me: OK. Whose do you think it is?

D: Jane's. (I put it aside for Jane's folder. Donna resumes her silent reading.)

Me: Did you have any questions to ask me about what I've been doing?

D: What ARE ya gunna do with it?

Me: Well I'm writing a book about it.

D: How come ya don't do boys?

Me: Um, mainly because there's not much that's been written just about girls' stuff and, um, I think somebody needs to do it. But I have got some boys' writing in it (my doctoral thesis), when they gave me their work (their writing). So I have got some of their stuff. But the research is about girls. So that's why I've got mostly girls' writing. (pause) Also I couldn't really do everyone in the school because it'd be too many to really concentrate on.

D: We've got two new girls now. Melanie lives with her Mum. Her Mum and Dad's divorced.

Me: So you're in grade 6. (now) So you and Lucy,

D: And Justin.

Me: And Justin. And when I first started coming out there (to the school) Margaret and Eve were the two grade 6 girls. You've sort of moved from the middle up to the

D: top.

Me: Yeah. (pause) And Kylie was just a Prep when I started. Now she's in the middle.

****

D: We've got two laptop computers now.

Me: That's great. Are they like the Apples to work?

D: Yeah, but you don't have to turn on all these buttons. And it runs off batteries. You just carry it around.

****

Me: I'm looking at what you write about. Especially when you write about girls. Like, here (looking at D's story), here's a story written by a girl, and she's writing about two friends who are girls.

D: (reading) Lucy and Jane.

Me: Yes. So that's what I do. And this one, (reading "Us"), this is about girls and boys playing together. And this one ("Nigel the Ram") this is about a sheep.

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D: This is a real one. (a true story) You've gotta climb up the tree before it gets ya.

Me: And its got a boy's name. So it's a ram.

D: Mmm.

Me: And you make Nigel into a sheepie (a cuddle blanket).

D: Mmm.

Me: Last year at the school I noticed that Chloe and Lucy were, um, often together, and you were sometimes the one by yourself. And I wondered if that was why you made Chloe have the sheepie (like a baby) in your story.

D: (quickly) Don't know.

Me: The next one (reading the next story).

****

Me: (reading "The Day I Got Madreyed") What's that? (Madreyed)

D: Married.

Me: What prompted that? (what made her write it?)

D: I dunno.

Me: I don't know either. (laughing) I mean, what makes girls write things like that? (pause) Television maybe?

D: (laughs)

Me: (reading) "he was a cuty man." (C doesn't correct me and say it's "city". I should have asked her whether she meant "city" or "cute".)

****

Me: (reading "A Farmer and His Sons") You've got all the details. Did you listen really carefully to the story, or did you have it in front of you?

D: Oh Mr B p'robly read it to us and said, (pause) (It looks as if it is a set exercise from a book with spaces for the children to supply the correct verb tenses.) I think we were just (pause)

Me: So how would that story go if it was about a woman and her daughters?

D: I dunno.

Me: (substituting female pronouns for the male ones in the story which D has transcribed) "An old woman feels that she has had not long to live. She called to her daughters to speak to them for the last time."

D: Mmm. That's a bit weird.

Me: No other comments?

D: Nup (small laugh)

****

Me: (reading "After School")

D: I got that out of a book.

Me: Did the book have the girls playing football?

D: Oh I made that up.

Me: (reading "Punchinello") See what happens is that the rhymes are about girls wanting to get married, but not about the boys wanting to get married.

D: Oh I just picked it out of a book.

Lucy: at her house in the living room (aged ten, 28.5.92)
(4.45 pm - 5.00 pm)

I got her Dad on the phone. I tell him why I am ringing. He says to ring back after they've thought about it. I do, and Lucy's Mum says she wants one of them to be there when I come. At their place would suit best. When I get there two boys are kicking a football outside. L's Dad is there. Says he's been sick with the 'flu, then goes off to another room. L picks up her folder of writing I've brought. We are sitting side by side on the couch. She flicks through about three pages roughly. Says "Yeah, it's mine," and hands it back. I say I'd like to tape us talking about it. We do. Later, her Mum arrives home from work, as I'm almost leaving. She says nothing about the writing or about me. We talk about how long she's been back at work. She's a science teacher at the High School. Three years, she tells me.

L: It's dumb. (The writing)

Me: Why did you write that? Were you given that as a topic?

L: Nup. I just thought of it.

Me: (reading "The Cloud Person") Where did you get the name from (Pete)? Peter/Peta could be a girl's name or a boy's name.

L: Just thought of it.

Me: It's a great idea having a tyre. I could do with a tyre sometimes.

L: (silence)

****

Me: (reading from various pages aloud in an effort to get Lucy to talk)

****

L: That's a dumb one.

Me: That's your favourite word.

****

(We talk about the animals they've got here. And about the rabbit that died at my place two weeks ago.)

Chloe: in my study at home (aged twelve, 29.5.92)
(5.15 pm - 6.00 pm)

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Most surprising. She suggests coming to my place. She does. Absolutely full of self-confidence. Strides down into my study before I do. I have to tell her which door. Sits herself down without a qualm and starts talking on tape. She's small, tightly muscled, looks older. Short gently curling hair. Tight bright pants. Goes on and on about horses. Keen to talk about her writing too. She's quite tough it seems.

After 45 minutes talking I have to end it and drive her into town so that she meets her mother on time. She would have talked longer.

Me: You wrote a lot of rhyming stuff.

C: Yeah it's easier. (reading "One Slimy Night.")

Me: (reading) "Give us a kiss sweetie."

C: What it was, there was this book and you had to, you know, you can say A B C or D and I looked through it and I thought "Yeah that's pretty good."

Me: So that was the idea? (for the writing)

C: Yeah it had that in it, so I thought I'd do it.

Me: What was the book? A book at school?

C: Yeah, it was one Lucy had got.

Me: And what about these drawings?

C: Yeah it's got Matthew Monster and Lucy Longbones. And you had to draw something appropriate.

Me: So did you copy these drawings or did you make them up?

C: Just made them up.

Me: What have you got the blank spaces in the middle for?

C: Well they had to be ghosts. (pause) And I wrote a continuation of this story this year, at High School, and I got an A minus for it. (a high mark) But I never got round to finishing it. It's got up to 15 pages now.

Me: Was it like that the one that you lost on the computer last year?

C: Oh, that one, oh, if you write them too long they're too long and the computers won't let you load it. It was a real good story. (pause) It was a major, (pause), it was about this girl and her parents die and she lived with an uncle in a circus, and see there was this horse that nobody could ever handle, and he was supposed to be this special breed, a black horse and he had white on his rump, and she tamed him, and like she ended up doing these acts, (circus acts) and like that was as far as I got. Then she was going to be chosen to go over to Vienna and learn all these fancy tricks and compete with horses. And it was a good idea but I couldn't get it printed. (she lost the file) You know you get an idea and when you get past that idea another idea's already there.

Me: Mmm. (beginning to read "Shopping".) I've written (journal notes on the photocopied story) "Donna and Lucy think that the woman in the picture is the "lady selling the toys", though initially Donna thought it was the mother." So I must have asked you "Who was she?"

C: You might have just said "What's it about?"

Me: Yeah. Yeah. (pause) The research that I'm doing is about women and girls, and how girls see themselves, and what sort of things get written

C: Mmm.

Me: about girls and women. (pause) One thing that I wasn't expecting, when I went out to the school, was that you write about each other.

C: Yeah well, we were so close, you know, in these city schools you have fights and that, but we were so close, and we were so buddy buddy. If you were going to play a trick on the teacher everybody knew it and no-body would tell. Like we'd know who it was if anybody dobbed (told on them) and that.

Me: So can you really see that now that you look back?

C: Yeah we were really close. Like we still go out as a group, like playin' in the creeks and that. Like it won't just be one or two of us, it'll be me, Lucy, Jane, Luke, Aaron and Brett. 'N then we'll meet Justin and other boy, Peter Porter. You know we really stuck together as a group.

Me: Yeah, (pause) so it wasn't just a girls' group.

C: No, it was the whole lot of us, I mean there wasn't enough girls, after a few years there was only five girls (in the school).

Me: Yeah, and after Margaret and Eve left you were always the oldest.

C: Yeah, but like, it was always like, Mr B always gave you time to work through your own stuff (the writing) and if you, ah, if you were real good at any subject, like I was real good at maths, he'd let you go your own way.

Me: You were really good at maths?

C: Yeah, maths is way too easy this year. (pause)

Me: In your writing, you didn't write about the boys like you wrote about the girls. And when I'd go out to the school, if I got there at playtime the girls would mostly be playing together.

C: Well you must have been there at the wrong times, 'cos we'd, like, all be playin'around together, and we'd be like, kickin' the soccer ball around, and we'd go over the fences, and then we'd have football especially the girls'd get out there and play. I mean mostly you could say the girls were better than most of the boys.

Me: You really palled up with Lucy although she's Donna's age. (They excluded Donna.)

C: Yeah, we had a lot of things in common, and likes and dislikes, and she knew I had a horse and that, ...(horse talk). And even though I'm at High School we ride together and all that now.

Me: So are Lucy and Donna close now? (now that she has left)

C: Now it's Jane and Lucy. You know, Donna's along side... Like when I first got there (she was new to the school in Grade 4, in 1989) I had a lot of trouble. Like people were pickin' on me. Like Rob Baker. And Lucy she was really nice to me. And we got to be friends. So Grant, instead of him teasing me and that, since I was with Lucy, he didn't do anything at all, and so we became real good friends. The three of us, us and Jane. And then later on Jane and Donna got close. And Donna tried to get close to us, like she got Prince (she got a horse), but she can't really ride. Like we've given her advice but she doesn't really take it in.

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Me: (reading "The Worm") Because I'm studying gender I'm interested in why you had a king here. (The story is about a king and his two sons.) Whether you'd write about a king or whether you'd write about a queen and what they would do.

C: Well the king (retells the story as written) ... and there's this worm and it turns into a beautiful princess. And they live happily ever after and they have a big family.

Me: See that's real stereotype stuff isn't it.

C: Yeah.

Me: See I was interested in why you'd write a story that was a stereotype like that. Whether you were sending it up?

C: (pause) I think we had to, like, write something like that.

Me: The boys didn't write things like that.

C: Yeah the boys would of wrote things like Nigel the ram and all that. (talks about Nigel the ram, avoiding the issue) ... like he (the ram) belonged to this lady and she had bright red hair and everybody thought she looked like a stoplight. I think she leased the paddock.

Me: Donna wrote about Nigel the ram.

C: Yeah, you would have got this story where me and her climbed up this tree and the whole tree was shaking (more narrative about the ram)...

Me: In her story she makes you into a real sook, she gives you a sheepie (a cuddle blanket made out of the ram's wool) like a baby.

C: Yeah, we kind of got in a fight, so that's why you do that.

Me: I wondered if she wrote it like that because it was the only way she could hit back at you.

C: (laughs a bit)

Me: She made you into a thirteen-year-old with a sheepie.

C: Yeah.(pause)

Me: You were pretty free with your writing, all of you.

C: Yeah, he wouldn't give us topics all that much 'cos when he gave us topics nothing much amounted of it.

Me: Mmm. But at the same time you often got pretty sick of it. You know you often didn't want to do it. (write)

C: Yeah.

Me: Are you a person who writes a lot now?

C: Yeah English is me favourite subject other than sport and PE (physical education).

Me: Have you got plans for when you leave school?

C: Well I'm hoping to leave school when I turn 15, and do years 10, 11 and 12 by correspondence and get a job as a jockey's apprentice.

Me: Oh, right.

C: 'Cos you know I've got dreams of havin' me own racehorses and that and trainin' them. I've got an early start, like one of the mares at my place, like many adults can't handle her and I've got the foal I'm breakin' in.

Me: So have you got a chance of doing this?

C: Yeah. The only reason I'd do correspondance is 'cos Mum and Dad Like they wouldn't approve unless I did.

Me: Yeah. (pause) How's your sister, the one who had the baby last year? (I think the sister was about 18 at the time.)

C: Oh, she's up at Melbourne University doin' Melbourne University science.

Me: Is she?

C: Mmm. it's s'posed to be one of the hardest subjects to get into. She started in February this year, so that was really good. She did a bit of correspondence the year Scott was born, that was when she was in year 12 and she still lived at home.

Me: That's great. That's terrific.

C: (talk about the baby being born and what he does now.) Next time he comes down I'll probably confiscate him and put him on one of the ponies. (He's just turned one.) They're livin' in an appartment in Heathdale now.

Me: A lot of people who, a lot of people say that you have to choose between being a good mother and going off and having an interesting life, a job or study.

C. Yeah that's a bit, that's stupid I reckon. Like Scott goes to Day Care and all that, and I went and stayed with Julie (her sister) in the holidays, and like it was funny to see them, he's always hanging around her, it's like she had a friend over

Me: (reading "Divorce. Part 3 of the Worm".) I got divorced about six years ago, and I bought this little house with my two daughters.

C. Yeah. (pause)

Me: (Pause, reading Chloe's writing) You write that the mother was home looking for you, not that the father was.

C: Yeah. Well, you know, that, in most stories, the mother seems to be the one that's there all the morning and that.

Me: In the stories, or in life.

C: (quickly) In the stories. I mean, I don't really think that's true. Like at our place, Dad leaves at about four o'clock in the morning to go truck driving. We're usually up early, and if Mum's up for some reason, she's the last one to leave the house but

Me: Are girls writing their stories like the stories they hear (read), or like the life that they know?

C: Yeah, well you'll get some ideas from books you've read, but then you'll get some from stuff that's really happened. (rising voice inflection at the end)

Me: So which would you say influences you (your writing) most, what really happens or what you read?

C: I think what really happens. You know? (pause)

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....

C: It kind of puts you off the way some of them act. (female teachers, she's referring to the relieving teacher and the additional teacher who was there for the term the school had 19 students.) I haven't got along too well with female teachers. In grade 5 we had a student (student teacher) and I didn't like her at all, and last term in grade 6 we had a female teacher, and me and her it was just straight out war.

Me: I saw that the few times I was out there.

C: 'Cos she had, like, the stuff she as tellin' us to work on was too easy, or too hard, and also

Me: But that wasn't because she was female. It was because she was a reliever.

C: Also her attitude.

Me: It was just her attitude?

C: Yeah. I'd on purposely cause trouble. You know I'd really be a bit of a ring-leader. Mr B used to let us bigger kids play this game on the asphalt, and we'd have, we'd throw shots at each other (with a ball), you'd have to yell out "Freeze" and your team would have to hive five bean bags to the other team, and one team'd run itself out of bean bags, and she said we couldn't play that game. So we went and got the bean bags and we were throwin' them on the wall, and then they got stuck, so we went and climbed up on the wall, and then we were playin' monkeys and runnin' along the wall, and bein' stupid, and like she come and and everyone went (she makes animal noises).

Me: One other thing I wanted to ask you. You got pretty pissed off with me coming out too.

C: Oh, well you know, sometimes you might wanna, you don't feel in the mood having people (me) write down exactly what you say.

Me: Yeah.

C: And you know, it's kind of, like, when Mr B'd say "OK it's time to write a story now," you know some of the times you wouldn't get anything done. What I really liked about the stories was goin' outside (she's skillfully got away from my question here) Like sometimes we'd run all over the place, and usually it'd be the boys that got caught.

Me: Yeah. The only way I could do the kind of research I wanted to do, was to really listen to what got said.

C: Yeah.

Me: Some people do research like that with video cameras but I didn't want to do that.

C: Yeah, you'd have kids wavin' at ya. The thing is, there's a lot of difference from our school (goes on to describe High School)

Margaret: at the office where her mother works (aged fourteen, May 1992)

(4.30 pm - 5.15 pm)

I phoned Margaret to ask if we could meet to talk about the research project I started when she was in Grade 6 three years ago. I say we could meet at her place, at my place or in my office at the University. She says she'll go and ask her mother. It's nearly six o'clock in the evening. She comes back to the phone and says her mother suggested we meet where she works as Margaret goes there after school each night to wait for a ride home. I say fine and we arrange it for 4.15 that Friday.

It's easy to pick Margaret. She's sitting down in the foyer flipping through a book, not facing me. I go straight over to her. Forget to find her mother and say hello. Margaret leads me into an office she tells me belongs to her mother's boss. We plug in my tape-recorder.

Me: I'll just test this thing to see if it works. OK.

All right. So.

M: (leaping straight in and showing me her writing from secondary school.) I've done a journal. This is year 7 and 8 work.

Me: So. It's what you've done at school. (Leah nods.) It's short stories, and whatever you feel like putting in?

M: Yeah.

Me: I'll just flick through.

M: I've changed my writing.

Me: Your handwriting?

M: Yeah. I print now. 'Cos it's easier. The teachers can read it easier.

Me: Oh, yeah. Are you into computers?

M: Yeah, and we've got one at home now.

Me: Have you? What sort?

M: IBM compatable.

Me: That's what I've got.

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Me: So if I look at that ... You're writing about two boys, OK?

M: Yeah.

Me: And there's a mother there.

M: She doesn't come in very often.

Me: OK. That's interesting because people often write about mothers and they're just there in the background. (Laughs)

M: Yeah. I know what you mean. That's what happens in the books you read. You hear about the father but you don't hear about the mother all that often.

Me: Yeah. When you write like that, is that because you're copying the stuff you've read? Or you have to do it? Or?

M: I Dunno. You just do it.

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Me: It's sort of hard to explain it?

M: Yeah.

Me: Yeah. Life's like that?

M: Well mothers are always there.

Me: I'm trying to decide whether I'll go to Melbourne specially to see my mother on Sunday. (It's Mother's Day.) It's a long way just for a visit to say hello. (An eight hour drive there and back.) I don't know. A lot of my friends have had their mothers die, and my mother is seventy-four.

M: Yeah.

Me: (Looking at M's writing: "The Sub." 1st term 1992) And this Mrs stuff. (the story has a Mrs in it) Have you got people you know who use Ms instead of Mrs.?

M: No none really.

Me: Well I do. I use Ms.

M: We've got teachers at school.

Me: So have you thought about that naming?

M: No not really.

Me: I use Ms because if you use Mrs everybody knows you're married and if you use Miss they know you're not. But if you use Ms, well it's a private thing.

M: Yeah. (silence)

Me: Can I do this one the same way? See, I'm interested in this word here. (Word is "man-made". Looking at writing piece also from this year's writing: "Fowling the nest.") Do you mean it's made by men?

M: It says on it, it says on the label "man-made".

Me: (laughing) Oh. So you didn't question that?

M: No I didn't question it.

Me: And you didn't change it?

M: I s'pose it could be women-made, but human-made it means.

Me: Yeah. But you didn't change the word, although you knew that. That's what I'm interested to see in your writing.

M: I s'pose that's what everyone writes when they say man.

Me: Well I don't write it, unless I mean it's made by men.

M: Don't ya?

Me: No.

M: Oh. Well I just write "human."

Me: (opening folder with M's photocopied writing from 1989.) Do you remember writing this?

M: Yeah. I've still got the book at home.

Me: Have you?

M: Yeah.

Me: So what do you think of it now?

M: I dunno. I haven't read it.

Me: OK (silence while she reads)

M: Oh. Embarrassing. (laughs)

Me: Why?

M: Oh the things I thought. (looking at "L Plate Story")

Me: How old were you ten? Eleven?

M: I would have been twelve because turned thirteen in December. Eve was younger than me.

Me: That's really interesting to me because you put my name in it.

M: Yeah.

Me: Can you remember why?

M: Just (pause) um (pause) 'cos you were there all the time I s'pose.

Me: Yeah.

M: So I made up a story about ya.

Me: Mmmm. One thing I noticed is that the girls wrote about each other a lot.

M: Yeah. At school now they say don't involve peole from your form and year level because it can sort of get (pause)

Me: Ah. (reading) One of the things I though you tried to do in this, oh just a moment, was, um, be a very powerful person yourself, and, um, by making me the one who couldn't get her L plates

M: Yeah

Me: you sort of put me down

M: (laughs)

Me: and I let you do that.

M: Yeah.

Me: I think that's really interesting now. Here you were, these two big strong grade six gotls. Two of you. (Laugh)

M: (laugh) Yeah.

Me: And I wasn't coming out as a teacher. I was coming out as a researcher. So you were testing yourselves out.Both of you.

M: Yeah.

Me: Just seeing how far you could go.

M: Yeah, Eve did one about you too.

Me: Right. So I found all that really interesting. (pause) So that idea about why you could write it like that was right?

M: Yeah.

Me: And it started off a whole lot of other things, because a whole lot of other pieces got written about L plates. In fact (laughs) even last year someone wrote an L plate story.

M: Yeah?

Me: Did you know that?

M: No. Who was it?

Me: I can't remember who it was. One of the girls. (pause) What happens in a little school is that as kids get older they remember the big kids.

M: What they wrote and stuff.

Me: Yeah. So when they get to that age, they write it too. So when you wrote that story you started off a whole new trend, And there's kids there still writing it.

M: (laughs)

Me: (laughs) But they missed the point. The point was that you wrote about me. See you couldn't write like that about Mr B.

M: No.

Me: You couldn't use his first name and write about him getting his L plates.

M: No.

Me: No, you couldn't. (pause) So you did the next best thing you could do and you wrote about me.

M: Yeah.

Me: Or maybe you did it because I was a woman and you wrote because I was a woman.

M: I dunno. It's just 'Cos you weren't sort of a teacher, I don't think.

Me: And I didn't care.

M: Mmmm.

Me: I wouldn't have let you throw rotten apples at me. But that didn't worry me. (pause, looking at next piece of writing.) See I'm looking at all of these in relation to what you were doing about gender.

M: Yeah. (phone rings somewhere.)

Me: I had a list of questions I was going to ask you. And questions you could ask me. (looking at own hand-written list) Oh. (beginning to go through list. A lot of them are already covered.)

M: (reading the questions we could both ask) So when you finish this study who does it go to?

Me: First of all it goes to my two supervisors at Latrobe University. Then it goes to three examiners somewhere else. Um, I'm not sure who they'll be. But I've already written a few little things that got published, I haven't used your real name or the name of where you live. I've used a few bits of your writing, like I said I would.

M: Yeah.

Me:I just quote a little bit, say, this bit here, and then I write something about it. Like I try to make sense of what you wrote so that I'm writing about gender and different ways of thinking about what you said. (pause) And I'm starting to get stuff published for teachers to read. Stuff about gender and about what gets written in classrooms. And what gets read, and said.

M: Oh yeah.

Me: And I think you probably know I went and said some of this stuff at some big conferences overseas. And I had some of your stuff on overheads. Yeah, your writing's been read in New York.

M: Oh no! (incredulously)

Me: Oh yes! So you've travelled. Not with your name though.

M: What did you call me?

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Me: Ah, Margaret. I don't know why I called you that. Do you want to be called something else?

M: Oh that'll do.

Me: With the younger girls, I asked them what they wanted to be called, and they made up a name. But you'd left school by the time I thought of that.

M: Who are the other girls in it?

Me: Oh, all the girls in the school. I wanted to get the full range. (reading pause)

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Me: (looking at my transcript notes about the "Fat Play", on the video Mr B made on the school camp)

M: Oh we won that.

Me: It was a competition? (between the boys and the girls, to see which play was better)

M: Me and Eve and a few other of the girls.

Me: They were all girls (in your play) on the video I saw. Was that a coincidence? (that no boys were in their play)

M: Oh no boys wanted to be in it, but they didn't want to be stupid or something (so the boys made up their own play rather than stuff pillows up their T shirts as the girls did. It seems that then Mr B turned the two plays into a competition.)

Me: Right. And I gathered that you and Eve worked it out (scripted the play about being fat)

M: Yeah. The others just went along with it.(the younger girls acted as they were told)

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Me: Was anything ever written down about that (the play) or did you just make it up on the spot?

M: No, we just made it up and told everyone what to say. We, Eve and me, we had the bigger parts, and we just gave the other kids the little parts.

Me: I found the whole fat thing interesting because the whole thing was a send-up on women trying to stay slim.

M: Yeah, that's what you see on the ads. It's always women, you hardly ever see men.(trying to lose weight) They don't care really.

Me: Yeah, So that was interesting to me. It wasn't really writing, but in a way it was because you did the play.

M: Um.

Me: The other thing I found interesting was, on the video, it looks as like you're pregnant. It's got this kind of link between the woman who is pregnant and the woman who is

M: (interrupting) Fat.

Me: Yeah. Wanting to loose weight. (pause) And I wasn't sure what to make of it. (Pause. Leah doesn't take it up.) What about this one? (looking at "Nail Biting")

M: I wrote that, I saw the picha (picture), and then I thought,

Me: Oh.

M: Mum's always telling me not to do that. (nail biting)

Me: Oh. What about your father?

M: Dad doesn't.

Me: He doesn't worry so much.

M: Nup.

Me: So what does that say about mothers?

M: They like long nails? (laughs)

Me: (laugh)

M: She's always saying "look at my nice long nails."

Me: Oh. Huh. (pause) Mmmm.

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Me: I should have said hello to your mother when I first came in. But I just saw you and went straight over to you.

M: It's OK. You can say hello to her after.

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M: That's Eve's writing.

Me: Oh.

M: I remember when she wrote that. ("Dyeing Love")

I was sitting next to her.

Me: Oh.

M: She still writes like that.

Me: Does she? (pause) How do you know? Don't you go to different schools?

M: Yeah, but I see her all the time. We go to different schools, but (pause)

Me: So you still talk about (pause)

M: Yeah. (pause) (looking at "The Night the School Burnt Down") I know why I wrote that one. I hatedschool at the time. (laughs) I don't mind school now, it's all right. I knew that wouldn't really happen (the school burn down) but it was a good ending

Me: Yeah. Who ticked it?

M: Mr B.

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(looking at "The Haunted House".)

Me: That's the first thing I saw from you that came from a computer.

M: Oh, I didn't like using computers.

Me: Why was that?

M: I don't mind using them now. 'Cos I was such a slow typer...

Me: One of the things that can happen with computers is that the girls use them less and the boys use them more.

M: Yeah, at Primary School. But now, for business typing, with the typewriters, all girls do it.

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Me: I noticed at the school last year the boys are using the computers a lot more than the girls.

M: Yeah *they're on them all the time.*

Me: People say that's because... But you don't think that (the fact that she avoided computers at primary school) that was because you were a girl, you think it was because you were slow (at typing).

M: Yeah, I was too slow, it was just faster to write it.

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(reading "The Night the School Got Robbed")

M: I remember that day really well, 'cs we were commin' up to school, Donna and I (younger sister), an' um everyone started runnin.' "The school's been robbed." And Mr B was just standin' there and lookin' at thewindow all the time. In a trance lookin' at the window.

Me: See what I'd think about with THAT is, who sorted out the problem, and who was the thief.

M: It was a woman.

Me: A woman thief? Huh. How do you know?

M: Because we were told.

Me: And who came to sort out the problem?

M: The police. A man. But we didn't worry. We were excited. It never happened before.

Me: You had really dramatic things to write about didn't you? You really went for action.

M: Yeah. I'm not into romance. I hate romantic books.

I hate those "Sweet Dreams" books. I like Judy Bloome. It's real life and everything. I've read them all. I like her.

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(reading "What I Don't/Do Want To Be."

Me: That was early in the year.

M: Yeah that (long silence)

Me: That was just how you used to talk.

M: Yeah. (pause, reading) "I would like to be a Mum?" (incredulously) I don't want to be a Mum.

Me: You don't?

M: No. I can't stand babies. (reading) I don't want to be a police lady. That's still right. I wouldn't mind being a teacher now.

Me: You wouldn't mind being a teacher?

M: Yeah, I wouldn't mind being a textiles teacher.

Me: You're into that?

M: Yeah. I've got my own sewing machine. I got it for Christmas.

Me: So what are you making?

M: I made pyjamas yesterday.

Me: Oh wow! That's something . can't do. So where would you train for that?

M: I dunno.

Me: You might have to go to Melbourne.

M: Oh. I'd have to get a car before that.

Me: Uh huh. You're going to get your licence?

M: Oh yeah. I'll get my licence as soon as possible.

Me: From the way you wrote you always seemed to be really interested in cars.

M: I like, 'cos Dad's always let us drive the cars around the paddock and that, 'n we've always had a motor bike to drive, I just like it.

Me: Some people say that where there are no sons in the family the first daughter is much more free to do all the things that boys would do.

M: Yeah I like helping Dad on the farm and all that.

Me: Yeah. Is there a future there for you? Could you go into farming?

M: I dunno. Haven't really thought about it.

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M: (reading "Famous Australian People") Why did you keep that?

Me: Um. I didn't have many examples of things that weren't stories. Also I was interested to see whether you wrote about a woman or a man.

M: Yeah, well it was a sort of Mr B's project.

Me: Did he pick John McArthur?

M: Oh you had to do one on everyone on a note. (a paper money note) He put one up on the board and then you had to decide what would be the next one.

Me: So how did you decide what the next one would be?

M: Oh we just did the one on the next note. Mr B wrote on the board Sir Douglas Mawson to start with.

Me: Did you do any on women?

M: Yeah I think we did one about Caroline.

Me: Caroline?

M: Chisholm. On the five dollar note.

Me: Oh yeah. Eve did one on Nellie Melba.

M: Yeah well afterwards you could do one on people not on the notes. I did one on Dame Joan Southerland.

Me: Oh.

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(reading "When I Got Divorced")

M: Ask me about the divorce one? (She doesn't wait to be asked.) That's the longest story I've ever written in my whole life.

Me: (laughs)

M: It took me ages.

Me: Yeah?

M: I don't know why I wrote this one. I wasn't into romance. I just wanted to write something different.

Me: It wasn't something you saw on television?

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M: No I don't think so.

Me: I wasn't there when you wrote this. You just gave me a copy of it. (pause) Maybe you were anxious because some kids' parents get divorced. A lot of kids get anxious about that.

M: Yeah. Oh Mum and Dad are fairly stable and everything.

Me: Yeah. (pause) That's what my kids thought and I did.

M: (laughs)

Me: (reading)

M: When you go to secondary college, you see people with all different backgrounds. Like there are step-fathers and step-brothers and all that.

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Me: Oh, I know. Dreams. I meant to ask you about dreams. Did you ever have any that you kept on having? Or one you really remember? When I was (a girl) at primary school I used to dream about wolves.

M: What?

Me: I used to dream...

M: Oh I just have different ones.

Me: Oh Hi! (to Margaret's mother, who walks in) How are you? It's been a long time.

Jenny: Yeah. (laughs) You look different.

Me: That's what Margaret said. And she does too. (the phone rings. Jenny answers it. Margaret and I are quiet for a while. The tape recorder gets turned off.)

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Jenny: (to me, but Margaret is there too) Donna's three and a half years younger. She'll be hopefully as intelligent as Margaret is, or as Margaret thinks she is.

Me: It's really interesting to me because I've watched the youngest girl at the school become the middle-aged girl, and the middle-aged girls become the oldest girls. But I haven't been out there this year.

Jenny: Mmm. That's right. Actually Donna's been in a little bit of strife this year. It's nothing bad. It's just that she's been a little bit silly. I don't know whether it's because she's in grade six.

Me: Mmm.

Jenny: She's been showing off.

Me: Oh it's good for her. Testing herself out.

Jenny: Yeah, and I said to Paul (Mr B), well there are a couple of the girls that are similar. Ar, they're trying to be top dogs.

Me: Yeah.

Jenny: And so, you know, it just keeps growing, one is silly and then the other one, and it just keeps getting worse.

Me: Yeah.

Jenny: So, ah, she comes in sometimes and she's as high as anything, but, ah, she's got to be careful, because I say to her, the little kids see what you're doing and then they think that that's the acceptable thing, I said, you have to be very careful, you have to set a good example for them.

Me: Mmm.

Jenny: I say, you have to know the difference between being ridiculous and having fun.

Me: Mmm.

Jenny: We don't want to stop you from having fun, but it does get a little bit tiresome. She's just being silly all the time. And he's having difficulty in teaching them.

M: (interjecting, to her mother) People have copied my stories. You know how I did that one on the L Plates and Jeanette? I started off a craze.

Me: They were still writing L Plate stories last year. (M and I laugh) So she's become a hero.

M: It's about Jeanette smashing up cars and everything. (Jenny's boss walks in. She is a woman I have met before because of her job here.) What do you think about women's writing Elaine? (abruptly asking her mother's boss the question.)

Elaine: (to M) Do you mean the physical characteristics? Or? Or?

Me: the content? I've met you before. (No-one has introduced us.) I've come in here to...(I explain what I'm doing. She can't place me. I am out of context)

Elaine: (loudly, surprised at such strange research) Oh, right.

Me: I'm Jeanette Rhedding-Jones.

Elaine: Oh, (she suddenly remembers me) I didn't realize you were out at the University. (When she met me before the possibility of this kind of employment didn't occur to her.)

Me: No, I did some research out at the school where Margaret was when she was in grade six. This has, this has been a follow-up interview. I've been looking at girls' writing.

Elaine: (to M) So what, what do you think about your former writing?

M: It's very embarrassing now.

Elaine: (laughs) Jenny... (work talk.)

Jenny: Oh, she rang...(work talk to Elaine)

Eve: in my office at the university (aged fourteen, 2.4.92)
(4.00 pm - 5.30 pm)

I arrange the time on the phone to Eve. She doesn't ask anyone. Just tells me John will bring her in next time he's going out to the University, which will be the following Thursday, she says. I tell her how to get to my office. She doesn't turn up. And doesn't ring. I wait two days and then I ring her again. She's apologetic and makes another time.

Eve and I get a cup of coffee in the staff room when she first arrives. John says he'll be busy for two hours and for Eve to just walk into the lecture room whenever she's ready.

Me: Just run it back and see if it's playing.

E: OK. (she tests the recorder) So you've done this every year, right? We were the first and you've kept on going out to the school?

Me: Yes. With some breaks when I couldn't get there or I didn't need to get there.

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E: Why did you pick that (my research) to do?

Me: Just because there's not a lot done on girls and their writing. There's a lot done on older girls, whether they're into romance, and what they're saying about being girls, but I wanted to do something different. And do it in a different way.

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(reading Margaret's "L Plates" story)

Me: (Eve is reading. Silence.) Yeah. I was there when you were both talking about how to write it. And I've got a tape of what the two of you said. Deciding what you said you were going to write. And it's really interesting to see what you did write.

E: (laughs)

Me: And then after that a whole lot of other things got written by the other girls, all trying to copy you. the others started writing L Plate stories too

E: You're kidding?

Me: Me. No, just because you two wrote them. (laughs)

E: (Laughs)

Me It got sort of passed down as sort of the big girls history.

E: (laughs)

Me: (laughs)

E: (seriously) I know why Margaret would have written something like this.

Me: Why?

E: 'Cos. 'cos she's done things like that on the farm. I wouldn't have at that stage. I barely do now.

Me: Yeah. (silence, E is reading "Jeanette's First Job")

E: Why did I write about you?

Me: (silence) That's the first thing that I saw you do on computer. As a print out.

E: (indistinct) I still can't type. Can't touch type. That one took me ages. (long pause as she reads "Grandma's House")

Me: And you were writing this kind of stuff at home too, you told me, as well as this stuff at school.

E: Yeah. I still do.

Me: That's good. (pause) Yeah, I wrote a diary when I was eleven or so,

E: I didn't write this did I? (she did) All these things?

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Me: I don't know. You tell me. (laughs)

E: I brought some of my work now. It's all so much changed. Even from year seven.

Me: Yeah. Yeah. Of course. (reading, pause)

E: I remember this story. (long pause) Aren't they terrible?

Me: They're not terrible for grade six.

E: Yes they are.

Me: Do you remember that? (the note from a boy)

E: Did I write that?

Me: No, no, one of the guys in the class

E: (loudly) Grant! This is real memorabilia! It's amazing!

Me: (laughing) (reading own handwriting on the note) "Given to JRJ by an unnamed boy. 16.5.89"

E: (shreiking) Did I give you this?

Me: Yes.

E: Why would I give you this? (pause)

Me: I'll tell you why. Because there was a guy in the class writing a note, to Donna I think, and Mr B didn't know, but you saw, and you turned around and you said, "I've got a whole lot of them." (Eve laughs with me) And I said, "Can I photocopy one of them? and you said, "Yes, as long as you don't show Mr B." (both laugh)

E: I don't know, I don't think Grant's changed at all since primary school. It's amazing, I've still got the bracelet he gave me too.

Me: Oh, isn't that sweet. Was that in grade six?

E: Yeah. (long pause, reading) All these stories. I can't believe it.

Me: Yeah. See, you had a lot of freedom. You weren't told what to write.

E: Mmm. Whatever came into our heads. The first thing.

Me: Well, I was interested to see just what you did when you had a free hand.

E: Mmm. What's this? (laughing, reading "Skyscraper") A building just fell on me?

Me: You were looking for drama, I think.

E: It's so unreal. A building falls down and next thing she knows she's got an artificial leg.

Me: (reading "Nellie Melba") I can't find the original photocopy to that. I made this overhead transparency) to show at a conference, without your name on it, and now it's all I've got. It's interesting because I've got a copy of the encyclopaedia where you got the information. And it's interesting to see what you copied and what you left out.

E: Mmm. (phone rings, break in recording) I got a real shock when I first went to High School. Before that it was such a bludge. Then we got all this homework and deadlines and everything.

Me: Mmm. And what about all this freedom? (that they had at Primary School)

E: No no we don't get that (now). They tell us what to write about. They tell us even how to structure the story.

Me: I'm not sure what I'm going to write about all this. (her writing as data for my research) You know, which bits I'll quote from.

E: This is from year seven. (showing me more recent writing)

Me: One thing that surprised me in following a small group of girls through for three years was that you didn't really write much. Any of you. I thought, well, from what I remembered from when I used to teach in Primary Schools I thought people wrote more, so that was a surprise to me, but it took an awful lot of effort to write a page.

E: I did write quite a bit.

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Me: But you see I'm not really studying, ah, how you wrote it or what the quality of you writing was.

E: You looked for?

Me: I actually looked for the constructing of femininity. So I looked at how girls see women. And how girls turn in to the kind of women they're going to turn into.

E: Mmm.

Me: And with the writing, what there is in the writing that could relate to feminism, and those issues, and equal opportunities. So they're the bits that I'm specially interested in. If it is there in the writing, or if it isn't. If you always wrote about men. well that would be interesting too.

E: Mmm.

Me: (reading year 7 writing) So this girl thinks that the mother is into peace issues but that the father isn't.

E. Yeah. (laughs very loudly) Wow, this is amazing. 'cos when you think about it, it's really all like that.

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Me: I'm not looking at how you write. I'm looking at what you write.

E: Yeah... I've never ever looked at it. I've never noticed about, how I write about women and men.

Me: Well see, here, as a writer, you've positioned yourself as a parent,

E: Mmm.

Me: Now I don't know at this stage whether you've made yourself, where do I first find out about, how do I know?

E: Well you don't. (the gender isn't differentiated in the writing)

Me: But you know.

E: Yeah. That's funny. (both laugh) It just had to be amother. 'Cos (indistinct) I dunno, I just don't see a man there.(reading "War". Written in year 7)

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Me: So, from the point of view of my study, why did you pick a woman? (reading "A New Life". Written in year 8.)

E: Oh, I like them better.

M: More interesting?

E: Yeah.

Me: So who's this "I"? (reads aloud "Later on I went into town to do the shopping.")

E: That's a woman. (both laugh) 'Cos I'm not a man, it's hard to write about "I" as a man.

Me: I'm the same.

E: I don't know what men think like. I've got this stereotype.

Me: Yeah. ... The boys' writing's very different.

E: What's it about? Shooting?

Me: Sometimes. And they're getting onto computers early.

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E: I didn't even know you were doing it on just girls.

Me: Well I did tell you, but I didn't want to influence what you wrote too much. And the guys gave me quite a lot of their writing anyway. To photocopy. And I said "Thanks very much." But I didn't ever visit the boys at home. Unless they had a sister at the school, and they were there when I called in. And anyway I would have been too busy doing the boys in as much detail. I tried to find out how each girl wrote what she wrote, and how it went from week to week.

E: Mmm.

****

(Re video "Fat Women.")

E: Oh no! Was it an ad. (advertisement) for Jenny Fat?

Me: Yes. It was quite clever.

E: It was because they always go on about all these women. I think we just turned it around and said "Well why not be fat and enjoy it?"

Me: It was your idea?

E: Oh yes. With Margaret. Me and Margaret, we really stuck together. And the boys and Mr B they were really sexist. He wouldn't let us play football and those kind of things.

****

Me: Looking at that photograph you brought me, that you took when you were in grade six, of, me, looking at that I just feel like I'm a different person now. Well I am.

E: Mmm.

Me: And when I look at this stuff I've had in the file (girls' writing), I don't see it now the way I saw it then. It means different things sort of.

E: Mmm.

****

Me: (re "L Plates") What was the name of that girl who left? In grade two? (pause) She had flaming red hair.

E: Oh, Natasha.

Me: Well as soon as she left you got yourselves all set up to write about her. You were going to pick on her, with a story.

E: Oh yes. ((laughs loudly) I remember hating her.

Me: But you were so much bigger. There were these two big strong powerful grade six girls, and they picked on this little girl in grade two.

E: That's what happens. I still do it. I mean, I don't write about it. But I, I pick at (indistinct)

Me: Yeah.

E: I call the year sevens "scum". You just keep it on. You do.

Me: Yeah. It's a power game.

E: Yeah.

Me: And after that you were going to write about Mr B's wife.

E: Yeah?

Me: Yeah. I've got this on tape.

E: Yeah, she was always going on about...and we used to think she shouldn't do that, and there was that time she knocked into the bike shed.

Me: Oh, that really happened?

E: Oh yeah, and Mr B said he'd have to make her pay for it out of her Expo money.

Me: Oh I thought you made that up. I've got that on the tape. That was the year after Expo. So it really happened? You were reliving the great moment.

E: Yeah. We all thought it was really good. We all thought it was great, what he said to her. (pause) I can't believe how bitchy we were. We were really bitchy. (pause) That's what we're like. Whereas men just crack the shit. But up until they they don't really show it.

Me: And after that, you suddenly thought you'd write about me.

E: Yeah. We were just totally bitchy.

****

E: I'll tell you something interesting. At our school we had an out of uniform day for International Women's Day, and I came in uniform because, I mean, why did we have to do it, I know all that kind of thing, and all, I just thought I wanted to be equal and they (the boys) didn't wear their ordinary clothes. I thought the guys should have been the same.

Me: Yeah, one of (my fifteen-year-old daughter's) friends actually wore her brother's school clothes to school that day, as a protest.

E: Hey, what a great idea.

Me: And she said it felt really great and she wished she could wear it all the time. (The girls at this school, which is also E's school, have to wear skirts every day.)

E: Mmm. I'd like to wear trousers. It's so cold, in the winter. And it makes the boys think (indistinct)

Me: I like skirts quite a lot, but I'd hate to be told I had to wear them all the time.

E: At Ruralsville the girls wore trousers all the time. We could wear whatever we liked.

Me: Mmm. And you were all really into extras. Things in your hair, and earings. Big loose tops and tight tight pants.

E: Yes. Very American.

****

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Me: Oh, dreams. I never asked you about that. Some of the things that got written were like dreams. Not yours so much, I don't think. But then I started wondering if the things people wrote about were something llike the dreams they were having. When I was a kid I used to get the same dream over and over. Quite a lot. And I kept on remembering.

E: I've lost my dreams. (pause) I used to have them. Heaps of them. But now I don't. And some of them were, oh I used to wake up and feel "Jo-Anne's dead." I used to have that dream. I know when things are dead. Honestly. After one of our holidays, I dreamed that my calf was dead, and I though no that's probably stupid. But is WAS. I used to have a cat dream, where the cat was dead.

Me: That didn't come through any of your writing.

E: No.

Me: Did you write about that in your diary then at home?

E: How did you know I had a diary?

Me: You told me. You said it was a secret.

E: Oh. When I think about it, an accident or something terrible, it's there. Like the one with the picture (year 7), like how she kills herself, she takes the drugs. And this one, where the building falls, that's a dream I had, when I was little, that the building fell on my legs. (finds and then reads "The Skyscraper") And she gets an artificial leg at the end! (incredulously)

Me: OK. I might be trying to read too much into it.

E: Mmm.

Appendix D: Extra Descriptions

Some of these descriptions are selected from a larger body of preliminary explorations of the Writings, the Chronology and the Interviews. Others supply extra information regarding the history of the school before and after the research project.

a. Biographies of the girls

As a 'factual' analysis phase, in 1992, I constructed a series of biographies, based on the data, for each of the girls. This involved untangling each girl's actions and words from those of the others' and producing a series of separate chronological accounts of what happened. This process was extended to include similar accounts of the boys and the adults, including myself, at the school. The following is from my descriptions of Donna in 1990. It exemplifies my preliminary descriptions.

1990: In grade four, Donna tells me about a new motor bike which she has fallen off (19.2.90). An older boy helps her with the computer (5.3.90) and a younger boy talks her into helping him with computer games at playtime. She is pleased to give me her writing to photocopy (16.10.90) and in fact befriends me when the other girls her age don't. The other two have moved together into the big desk at the back, that is by school tradition the oldest girls' place (22.10.90). One of these girls is exactly the same age as she is (19.11.90), although Donna is noticably taller. The other girl is a year older. Donna writes, "Super F Was a Girl". Outside, she kicks footballs with the boys and wrestles with the older girl (22.10.90). On the school telephone she takes over the organization of my next visit to the school, informing the teacher afterwards when I shall be there (10.12.90). She frequently provides words a boy reader cannot manage when reading aloud to the group (10.12.90) and answers for an older boy when I ask him a question.

b. Literacy pedagogy at the school

These descriptions are made from the Chronology with an understanding based on mainstream/commonsense concepts of literacy pedagogy. This means I have applied dominant pedagogic ideas about literacy, teaching and learning to describe the practices I observed. Descriptions such as these, however, cannot lead to the understandings I sought. To arrive eventually at a series of descriptions that show how girls construct gendered positionings, mainstream reading of the literacy agenda had to be left behind. Here is a sample from the first year of the fieldwork.

1989: The teacher reads aloud to the children as a demonstration of how written narrative is textually organized. The children see that stories are interesting and this is intended to effect their own story writing which they will work on immediately afterwards (4.2.89). The younger children discuss their writing with the teacher before they do it. He writes for the youngest so that they begin to feel like writers. The children are free to work outside if they wish. They read their writing aloud to the teacher when it is finished (7.3.89). They write shared text together in small groups. They discuss their writing with each other (14.3.89). Older children's writing drafts are carefully rewritten into their story books later. Easter becomes a writing topic. The chalkboard functions as a place for important writing to be done by the teacher. It needs to be read and sometimes copied (23.3.89).

c. Adulthood, boyhood and girlhood

This description of the school allows some of the discourses of gender to be seen. Here they intersect with discourses of age and power. These descriptions were made just after the data collecting phase was completed. The sample here regards the boys, although the wider body of descriptions include those of girlhood and adulthood. Here the descriptions are not qualified by specific dates.

1989-1991: The boys mostly play with each other, although sometimes the girls play with them. When this happens, the games are, with one exception, the same games that the boys play when the girls are not there. The boys also write about each other, although this same-sex reference in their writing is not as marked as is the girls'. Their writing is also different from the writing of the girls in terms of its content. Topics which the boys write about, but which the girls never do, are football, father as hero, motor bikes and fighting. The boys sometimes interrupt the girls when they write, although the reverse was not seen. They occasionally write what their teacher calls 'love letters' to the girls, who never write them but only receive them. One boy threatens a girl with kisses when she annoys him, although sometimes the girls 'blow' kisses to the boys across the classroom. Towards the end of the three years of my research work at the school, the boys are using computers noticably more than the girls. When I first began, the computers were relatively new and rarely used by anybody. The teacher is seen, on one occasion, to tell a boy to work elsewhere, as he uses computers too much. The boys take initiatives to be included in my study of the

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girls' writing. This is evidenced by them giving me what they write, asking to use my camera and asking about my research.

d. Extract from published history

The following is a quotation from a published source which must remain unidentifiable so that I can preserve the anonymity of the Ruralsville school. I have changed the names accordingly.

The first school committee was appointed in 1861; its members were Messrs Z, Y, X, W, V, U. ... John Z's 15 year old daughter Esther was appointed a temporary teacher. Records for that year show that 53 children were enrolled, eleven of whom were between the ages of 3 and 5 years. The Inspector, Mr T, in a report dated xxx described Miss A's efforts as "creditable", but advised the appointment of a male teacher when the new school was opened. .. The new school was opened in xx 1862 with James T as teacher. ... 1873 saw 243 children (average attendance 228) enrolled, and overcrowding was so bad that the Education Department recommended that a third room 60' X 20' be built. ... By the 1880's there were 300 children on the roll. ...By 1875 George S was still the Head Teacher, with Esther Z and Annie C as assistant teachers and Ellen D and Elizabeth E as pupil teachers.

The Ruralsville school was being damaged by straying cattle in 1877. ..."it would be reasonable to assume that a fence would be erected thus preventing the nuisance of straying cattle and horses", stated the (local) Gazette. ...The Catholic community felt a need to open a school, which was named St R's in 1907, and so the attendance at Ruralsville dropped markedly. The school's master residence and two of Ruralsville's schoolrooms were dismantled around this time, leaving only a small building, which consisted of a classroom, office and cloakroom. During the construction the children were taught in the Mechanics Hall. One pupil recalled that carpenters on the site made stilts for presentation to six of the children, one of whom chose to use the stilts to "walk" to and from school each day. ...During its service to the community, Ruralsville was closed twice due to lack of students .. When the teacher was withdrawn in 1927, two pupils, Barbara E and Rene F took the classes without pay for several weeks whilst the committee sought a teacher, but to no avail.

From around 1930 until the early 1950's Ruralsville was used on Sundays for church and Sunday school services. During world war one, pupils did not have playtime as such, but spent that time knitting sox, mittens and pyjamna cords for the soldiers in France. ...On cold wet mornings, one teacher suplied hot cocoa, whilst the children dried out in front of an open fire. Two spelling mistakes called for a cut from the strap, in reality a cat o' nine tails. To pull one's hand away meant 100 words after school. ...Twelve students were attending Ruralsville State Primary School in 1987. They were G, H, I, J, Donna K, Lucy L, M, N, Margaret O, P, Q, and R.

e. Extract from newspaper article

The following is a quotation from the local newspaper. I omit its name, the names of the schools mentioned and the exact date, to preserve anonymity.

December 1993:

Five schools marked their forced closure with special commemorative days at the weekend. Z, Y, X, W and Ruralsville schools all marked their final year's education with family days. At Ruralsville yesterday, up to 150 people - former teachers, students and parents -gathered for a special tree-planting ceremony. Ruralsville Primary School council president Judy Watkin said a native tree was planted outside the school grounds to mark the end of its 131-year service. A commemorative stone was also laid in the old school grounds, recording the final chapter of the school's life. Former students dating back as far as 1919 and 1920 attended the day's activities.

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